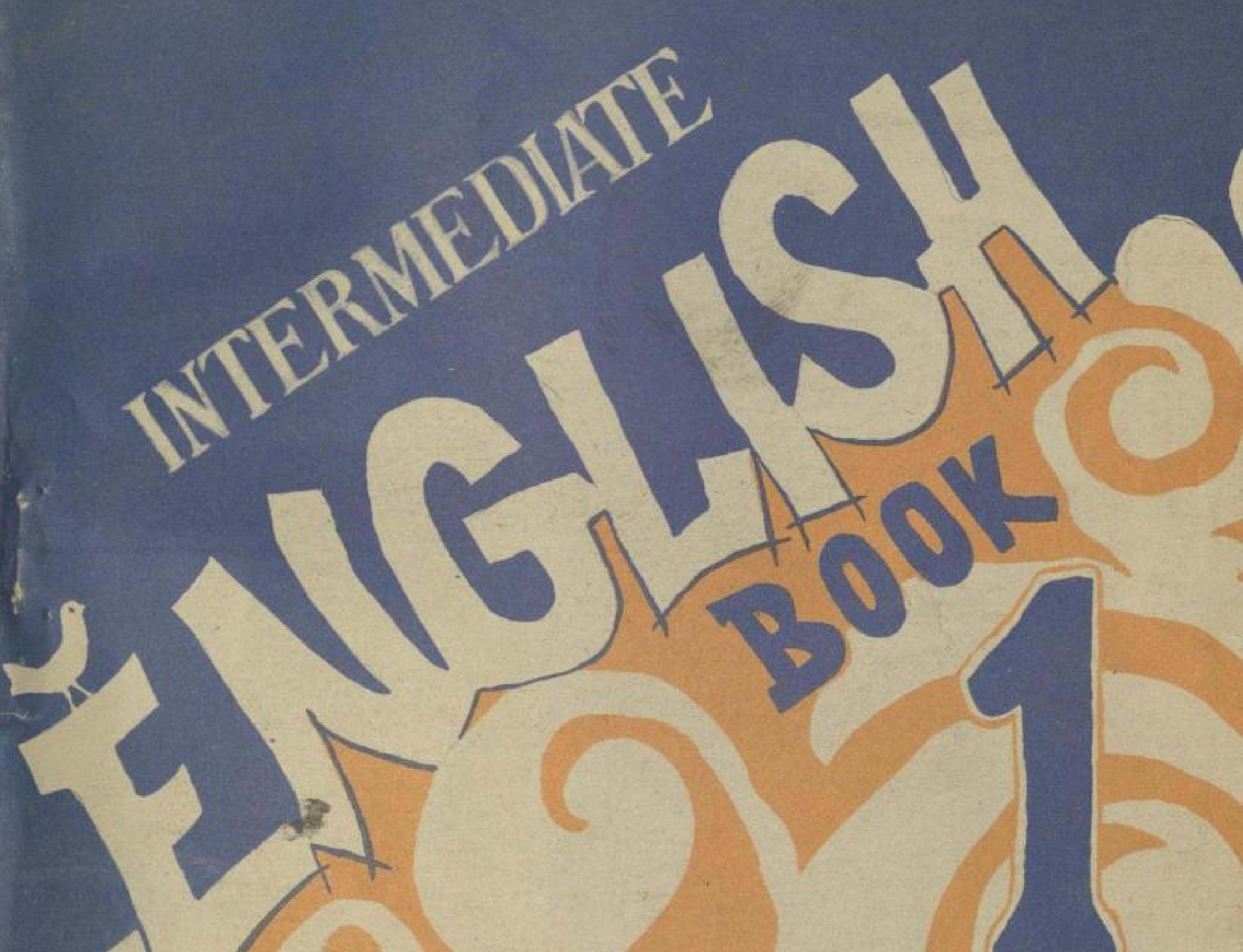
# INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH

## BOOK 1



BALOCHISTAN TEXT BOOK BOARD
QUETTA

# INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH

## BOOK—I

## (SHORT STORIES)

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**Corrected by:**

National Committee for the
Review of School/College
Textbooks.

**Selected by:**

Prof. M. SIDDIQ KALIM.

**Edited by:**

Mrs. S.M. SULERI.

Printing Supervision by:

**ZULLEJA BAZAI**

**Printed at**
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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

# PREFACE

I was commissioned by the Punjab Text-book Board to compile a book of "Short Stories in simple, modern language," having "a moral, scientific and historical content," for the students reading for their Intermediate examination. It was a difficult assignment, indeed.

For preparing such a book as this, the Board required me to combine quite a few educational and literary interests, some of them even conflicting. The major objective of prescribing books of English at this stage, over the past one decade or so has been, and no doubt still is, the teaching of functional English. And since for achieving this purpose we have to have a recourse to literature, it is only necessary that we select pieces which are written "in simple, modern language." Moreover, these pieces must aim at developing the mind and character of students more or less in a framework of modern knowledge. This latter condition made my task still more difficult. But I am glad to say that I was able to select stories from various,latest anthologies which, in my opinion, should fully meet this requirement.

At the same time, I have not sacrificed literary demands as such. I have included short stories which give a fair idea of what a modern short story is. Concomitant to this purpose as well as with a view to providing pleasurable relief to the student, I have included some humorous pieces which are specimens of good English as well as of decent fun.

This anthology is therefore intended to introduce Intermediate students not only to short stories as literature, both serious and non-serious, but also and in fact, with a greater emphasis, to the achievements of great heroes in various fields of life as well as to some important scientific phenomena and principles. But all these pieces are stories, and being of varied interests will, it is hoped, provide them with interesting reading.

"Notes" included at the end of each story should provide the student with sufficient information and background to understand and appreciate the stories intelligently and discerningly. Only such words and expressions have been explained as cannot easily be seen in a good dictionary. Naturally, therefore, explanatory notes have been given on references and allusions.

Last but not least, I should expect the teacher to acquaint the student with the technique of a short story since any criticism that does not proceed from a formal basis is idle and vain.

I therefore hope that this anthology will achieve the literary educational objectives for which it has been prepared. It may open new intellectual avenues for our students so that with the discipline and cultivation thus acquired they will not only prove to be good scholars but also decent human beings.

*M. Siddiq Kalim*

# INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH BOOK I

## ( SHORT STORIES )

# HIS FIRST FLIGHT

*Liam O' Flaherty*

The young seagull was alone on his ledge. His two brothers and his sister had already flown away the day before. He had been afraid to fly with them. Somehow when he had taken a little run forward to the brink of the ledge and attempted to flap his wings, he became afraid. The great expanse of sea stretched down beneath, and it was such a long way, down miles down. He felt certain that his wings would never support him, so he bent his head and ran away to the little hole under the ledge where he slept at night.

Even when each of his brothers and his little sister whose wings were far shorter than his own, ran to the brink, flapped their wings and flew away he failed to muster up courage to take that plunge which appeared to him so desperate. His father and mother had come around calling to him shrilly, upbraiding him, threatening to let him starve on his ledge unless he flew away. But for the life of him he could not move.

That was twenty-four hours ago. Since then nobody had come near him. The day before, all day long he had watched his parents flying about with his brothers and sister, perfecting them in the art of flight, teaching them how to skim the waves and how to dive for fish. He had, in fact, seen his older brother catch his first herring and devour it standing on a rock, while his parents circled around raising a proud cackle. And all the morning the whole family had walked about on the big plateau mid-way down the opposite cliff, taunting him with his cowardice.

The sun was now ascending the sky, blazing warmly on his ledge that faced the south. He felt the heat because he had not eaten since the previous nightfall. Then he had found a dried piece of mackerel's tail at the far end of his ledge. Now there was not a single scrap of food left. He had searched every inch, rooting among the rough, dirt-caked straw nest where he and his brothers and sister had been hatched. He even gnawed at the dried pieces of spotted eggshell. It was like eating part of himself.

He had then trotted back and forth from one end of the ledge to the other, his grey body the colour of the cliff, his long grey legs stepping daintily, trying to find some means of reaching his parents without having to fly. But on each side of him the ledge ended in a sheer fall of precipice, with the sea beneath. And between him and his parents there was a deep, wide chasm.

Surely he could reach them without flying if he could only move northwards along the cliff face? But then on what could he walk? There was no ledge, and he was not a fly. And above him he could see nothing. The precipice was sheer, and the top of it was perhaps farther away than the sea beneath him.

He stepped slowly out to the brink of the ledge, and, standing on one leg with the other leg hidden under his wing, he closed one eye, then the other, and pretended to be falling asleep. Still they took no notice of him. He saw his two brothers and his sister lying on the plateau dozing, with their heads sunk into their necks. His father was preening the feathers on his white back. Only his mother was looking at him.

She was standing on a little high hump on the plateau, her white breast thrust forward. Now and again she tore at a piece of fish that lay at her feet, and then scraped each side of her beak on the rock. The sight of the food maddened him. How he loved to tear food that way, scraping his beak now and again to whet it! He uttered a low cackle. His mother cackled too, and looked over at him.

Ga, ga, ga, he cried, begging her to bring him over some food. Gawl-ool-ah, she screamed back derisively. But he kept calling plaintively, and after a minute or so he uttered a joyful scream. His mother had picked up a piece of the fish and was flying across to him with it. He leaned out eagerly, tapping the rock with his feet, trying to get nearer to her as she flew across. But when she was just opposite to him, abreast of the ledge, she halted, her legs hanging limp, her wings motionless, the piece of fish in her beak almost within reach of his beak.

He waited a moment in surprise, wondering why she did not come nearer, and then maddened by hunger, he dived at the fish. With a loud scream he fell outwards and downwards into space. His mother had swooped upwards. As he passed beneath her he heard the swish of her wings.

Then a monstrous terror seized him and his heart stood still. He could hear nothing.

But it only lasted a moment. The next moment he felt his wings spread outwards. The wind rushed against his breast feathers, then under his stomach and against his wings. He could feel the tips of his wings cutting through the air. He was not falling headlong now. He was soaring gradually downwards and outwards. He was no longer afraid. He just felt a bit dizzy. Then he flapped his wings once and he soared upwards.

He uttered a joyous scream and flapped them again. He soared higher. He raised his breast and banked against the wind. Ga, ga, ga. Ga, ga, ga. Gawl-ool-ah. His mother swooped past him, her wings making a loud noise. He answered her with another scream. Then his father flew over him screaming. Then he saw his two brothers and sister flying around him, curvetting and banking and soaring and diving.

Then he completely forgot that he had not always been able to fly, and commenced himself to dive and soar and curvet, shrieking shrilly.

He was near the sea now, flying straight over it, facing out over the ocean. He saw a vast green sea beneath him, with little ridges moving over it, and he turned his beak sideways and crowed amusedly. His parents and his brothers and sister had landed on this green floor in front of him. They were beckoning to him, calling shrilly. He dropped his legs to stand on the green sea. His legs sank into it. He screamed with fright and attempted to rise again, flapping his wings. But he was tired and weak with hunger and he could not rise, exhausted by the strange exercise. His feet sank into the green sea, and then his belly touched it and he sank no farther.

He was floating on it. And around him his family was screaming, praising him and their beaks were offering him scraps of dog-fish.

He had made his first flight.

---

## NOTES

Liam O'Flaherty was born in the Aran Islands off the West Coast of Ireland. His film about life in these islands is a classic of the cinema screen. His novels and short stories are well-known.

"His First Flight" reveals his powers as a writer. It shows how deeply he had watched this incident in detail. He had also closely observed the colours, the movements and the sounds which he ably describes.

The story is narrated in a natural and convincing manner. The writer shows complete sympathy with the young seagull. This was the most important day in his life. His parents, his brothers and even his little sister had left him to his own to overcome his reluctance and fears. He must learn to fly and dive even in order to obtain his food. It was so essential for his survival. This was to change his very life.

The story brings out the intelligence, and the psychology of seagulls, and also their co-operation as a family

| | |
|---|---|
| **mackerel:** | sea-fish used as food. It approaches shore in great numbers in summer for the purpose of reproduction. |
| **gnawed:** | to bite with repeated efforts. |
| **precipice:** | extremely steep bank or cliff. |

**curvetting:** leaping, jumping, moving rapidly or suddenly (Actually a horse's leap with fore-legs raised together and hind-legs raised with a leap before fore-legs reach ground).

## EXERCISES

1. How did the parent seagulls teach their young ones to fly?
2. Describe the feelings of the young bird after the flight.
3. Write in your own words the writer's careful observation of the ways of seagulls.
4. Does this story give you any insight into the psychology of the seagulls? Give examples to illustrate your answer.

*** ** * ** ***

# POST HASTE

*Colin Howard*

"I say, I am pleased to see you!" declared the little man standing dejectedly by the pillar-box.

"Oh, hallo!" I said, stopping. "Simpson, isn't it?"

The Simpsons were newcomers to the neighbourhood, and my wife and I had only met them once or twice.

"Yes, that's right!" returned Simpson. He seemed quite gratified by my ready recognition. "I wonder if you could lend me three-ha'pence?" I plunged an investigatory hand into my pocket. "You see, my wife gave me a letter to post, and I've just noticed it isn't stamped."

"They never are." I said, sympathetically.

"It must go tonight--it really must! And I don't suppose I should find a post-office open at this time of night, do you?"

The hour being close upon eleven, I agreed that it seemed improbable.

"So I thought, you see, I'd get a stamp out of the machine," explained Simpson, not without pride in his ingenuity. "only I find I haven't any coppers on me."

"I'm awfully sorry, but I'm afraid I haven't, either," I told him, concluding my explorations.

"Oh, dear, dear!" he said. Just like that. He was that sort of little man.

"Perhaps somebody else--" I put forward.

"There isn't anyone else."

He looked up the street, and I looked down. Then he looked down the street, and I looked up. We both drew blank.

"Yes, well!" I said, and made to move off. But he looked so forlorn, standing there clutching a blue, unstamped envelope, that I really hadn't the heart to desert him.

"Tell you what," I said. "You'd better walk along with me to my place--it's only a couple of streets off--and I'll try to hunt up some change for you there."

"It's really awfully good of you!" said Simpson, blinking earnestly.

At home, we managed to run the coveted three-ha'pence to earth. I handed the sum to Simpson, who in the most business like way, made a note of the loan in his pocket-book, and departed. I watched him take a dozen steps up the road, hesitate, and then return to me.

"I say I am sorry to trouble you again, he said. "The fact is, we're still quite strangers round here, and--well, I'm rather lost, to tell you the truth. Perhaps you'd direct me to the post-office?"

I did my best. I spent three solid minutes in explaining to him exactly where the post-office was. At the end of the time I felt as lost as Simpson.

"I'm--I'm afraid I don't quite--" he blinked.

"Here, I'd better come along with you," I said.

"Oh, I say, that's awfully kind of you!" he assured me.

I felt inclined to agree with him. I led the way to the post-office. Simpson inserted a penny in the automatic stamp-machine. The coin passed through the machine with a hollow rattle. Its transit failed to produce the desired stamp. Simpson looked at me with a what-do-I-do-now sort of expression.

"It's empty," I explained.

"Oh!" said Simpson.

Experiment revealed that the stock of ha'penny stamps was also exhausted. Simpson, in his agitation at this discovery dropped his letter face downwards on the pavement, whence he retrieved it with the addition of a large blob of mud.

"There!" ejaculated Simpson quite petulantly. "Now it's got mud on it!" He rattled the empty machines spitefully. "Well, what can we do now?"

I gathered that I was definitely a member of the posting party.

"I suppose it must go tonight?" I said.

"Dear me, yes! My wife was most insistent about that. She said I wasn't to--it's--well, I don't know that it's extraordinarily important, but--but I'd better post it, if you know what I mean."

I did know. Or, at least, I knew Mrs. Simpson.

"I know--I've got a book of stamps at home!" I suddenly remembered.

"We ought to have thought of that before!" aid Simpson, almost severely.

"We'd better hurry, or we shall miss the post," I told him.

We hurried. It was as well we did hurry, because it took rather a long while to find the book of stamps. And it wasn't really worth finding, after all. It was empty.

"How very provoking!" was Simpson's summing up of the matter.

"Funny!" I said, "I could have sworn it was nearly full!"

"But what about my letter?" asked Simpson, dolefully.

"You'll have to post it unstamped, that's" I said, I was beginning to lose interest in Simpson's letter.

"Oh, could I do that?" he asked, brightening.

"What else can you do? The other chap will have to pay double postage on it in the morning, but that can't be helped."

"I shouldn't like to do that."

"Neither should I. Still, that's his trouble. Now hurry, or you'll miss the last collection."

Much flustered by this reminder, Simpson went on up the street at a trot.

"Hi! The other way!" I roared after him.

"Sorry!" he panted, returning. "I--I rather think I've forgotten the way again."

I didn't even start to explain. I just took him firmly by the arm and escorted him to the post-office, in time for the midnight collection.

I knew it would save me time in the end. He dropped in his letter and then, to finish my job properly, I took him home.

"I'm most awfully grateful to you, really," he assured me, earnestly, from his doorstep. "I--I can't think what I should have done without you. That letter--it's only an invitation to dinner, to--good gracious!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing. Just something I've remembered."

"What?"

But he didn't tell me. He just goggled at me like a stricken goldfish, jerked out a "goodnight," and popped indoors.

All the way home I was wondering what it was he'd remembered.

But I stopped wondering next morning. When I had to pay the postman three pences for a blue envelope with a great muddy mark on its face.

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**NOTES**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Machine:** | here it refers to one of the machines from which postage stamps can be obtained by inserting coins. |
| **Coppers:** | it is used here for copper coins, pennies and half-pennies. |

## EXERCISES

1. How did Mr. Simpson eventually post the letter? What was the letter?
2. Do you find the story funny? Give reasons for your answer?

*** ** * ** ***

# THE ROAD TO THE EAST

*Elspeth J. Boog Watson and*
*J. Isabel Carruthers*

---

"Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells,
When shadows pass gigantic on the sand,
And softly through the silence beat the bells,
Along the Golden Road to Samarkand."

Nearly seven hundred years ago, there set sail from the city of Venice two brothers called Nicolo and Maffeo Polo. They were merchants, and they hoped to sell their goods for so much money that they would return to their native city wealthy and honoured. But day after day passed, week after week, and the brothers did not return.

Nicolo had left behind him a baby son called Marco, and as the little boy grew older he began to wonder where his father could be. Was he alive or dead? Had he reached some far-off city of countless riches such as the Venetian sailors told of? It was only natural that Marco Polo should talk to the seamen and hope to learn from them about his father.

Besides, it was difficult for any boy brought up in Venice not to be interested in sailing and trade. For the city was built on islands, and between these islands ran the water of the blue Mediterranean. On either side of these canal-streets stood palaces, churches, and houses with gaily-coloured roofs. The docks were full of ships unloading great bales of rich silks, and cargoes of spices which, the sailors said, had been carried for thousands of miles upon the backs of camels before being put on board the ships. It was small wonder if young Marco Polo longed to travel to these shining cities of the East whose very names are full of magic--Constantinople, Laiassus, Bokhara, Samarkand.

Many years passed by, and no news of his father or uncle had reached Marco Polo, when one day a ship put into the harbour of Venice, and from it there stepped two weather-beaten strangers--at least, they appeared to be strangers, so long was it since they had set foot in their native city. For these were Nicolo and Maffeo Polo, and it was a strange story they had to tell.

They had travelled, they said, through the mountains of Asia Minor, and having completed their business were about to return when they learned that the road by which they had come was blocked by a tribe of savage Tartars. So they decided to go on and try to find their way home by some other route. At length they reached the city of Bokhara. There they stayed for three years, unable to come home or to travel farther, and there they met a great noble from whom they learned that if they went on they would come to the court of the Emperor, Kublai Khan, who would treat them well and send them home in safety. Another year of travelling brought them to the land of the Emperor, the land of Cathay which we now call 'China'.

Kublai Khan was not himself a Christian;

but he was interested in what they told him of Christ's teaching, and bade them go back and fetch one hundred missionaries to preach to his people, and also some oil from the holy lamp which was kept burning upon the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem. To help them on their journey he gave to them a golden tablet on which was engraved his command that all his subjects should give them food and protection.

When Marco Polo heard the story of these adventures he asked his father and uncle to take him back with them to the court of Kublai Khan, and to this they agreed; but first they had to get the holy oil and look for the hundred missionaries. The first of these was easy enough, but the second gave them great difficulty; for the road was long and dangerous, and in the end only two preachers could be persuaded to set out with Nicolo, Maffeo, and Marco Polo for Cathay.

In the year 1271, the five adventurers set sail from Venice in a ship whose high forecastle and brightly coloured sails would seem to us gay and attractive--but we should find the inside of the ship less pleasant. The cabins were small, dark and illsmelling, the food was bad, and the ship tossed terribly when the wind blew. But, at last, the travellers reached Laiassus on the shore of the Mediterranean, and from there they set off overland to reach the court of the great Emperor.

The road was rough, and there were stories of robbers and even of savage armies. The two missionaries, thoroughly frightened, turned back, but Nicolo with his son and his brother, went on. The heavy snows, the flooding of the rivers, the terrible cold, kept them from travelling during the winter, and it took them three years to come near the court of the Emperor.

At last they learned that they were within three months' journey of him, but before they could reach him they had to endure the greatest danger of all, for now they had reached the terrible Gobi Desert which lies to the West of the Great Wall of China.

They had been warned of the perils of this vast wilderness, of the sandy plains and barren mountains, of the lack of food and the risk of dying of thirst, of the horrible voices and evil spirits that were said to lure men to their death in this trackless, waterless expanse. But they went forward undaunted, and, by careful preparation and management, succeeded in marching from well to well, seeing nothing of the evil spirits, till at long last they reached the land of Cathay.

Weary but triumphant the three Venetians came to the Court of the Emperor and were honourably received by him. Nicolo and Maffeo told the story of their journeys, and gave to the Emperor the holy oil. Then Kublai Khan asked who the young man was, and Nicolo answered, "This is your servant, and my son." "He is welcome," replied the Emperor, 'and it pleases me much."

Kublai Khan took a fancy to the intelligent young Venetian, and employed him to travel through his dominions and report upon the state of the different provinces and cities. Marco Polo already knew the Tartar language, as did his father and uncle; now he set himself to learn the other languages of China, and succeeded so well that he could note for the Emperor all that was of interest in the different places which he visited. On his side, Marco Polo had great admiration for Kublai Khan, who, he said, was 'styled Lord of Lords, and is of the middle stature, that is, neither tall nor short; his complexion is fair, his eyes are black and handsome, his nose is well-shaped and prominent.'

Kublai Khan was indeed a great ruler, and Marco Polo was impressed by the splendour of his court and of his cities. Of his capital, Peking, he tells us that it was surrounded by a wall, twenty-four miles long, in which there were twelve gates, and each gate was defended by one thousand men. The streets were so straight that a man standing on the wall above one of the gates and looking in front of him could see the gate opposite him on the other side of the city, six miles away.

Kublai Khan was renowned for the magnificence of his feasts. The Emperor sat facing southandraisedso high that even his sons sat with their heads upon a level with his feet. Those who waited on him had to cover their noses and mouths with embroidered silk lest they should so much as breathe upon his food, and when he drank all knelt while musicians played. At certain feasts presents were given to him, of, for instance, gold, silver, jewels, or horses; 'and now,' says Marco Polo, 'I shall relate a wonderful thing: a large lion is led into his presence, which, as soon as it sees him, drops down and makes a sign of deep humility, owning him its lord, and moving about without any chain.'

After seventeen years of service to the Emperor, Marco Polo wished to return with his father and uncle to their own city of Venice. The Emperor did not wish to let them go; but it happened, luckily for Marco Polo, that a Princess of Cathay was to be married to a Prince of Persia. The Emperor wanted to send the little princess, Kogatin, by sea, for the dangers of the land journey from China to Persia were great. Marco Polo was familiar with the sea-route, and his father and uncle knew something of ships. So Kublai Khan decided to send the little princess in their charge to Persia, and to allow them to go home.

For a year and a half Kublai Khan's fleet sailed by the coasts of Malaya and India till it reached Persia. But when Marco Polo landed, he was met by sad and troubling news. The prince whom Princess Kogatin was to have married was dead. The Venetians wondered what to do. They could not take the princess to Venice with them; they could not send her back friendless and unaccompanied to China; they could not leave her lonely in a strange land. But the Persians solved the problem: the prince, they said, had left a son--why should not the princess marry him? So it was all happily arranged. Marco Polo escorted the princess to the court of the Persian prince, and then he, Maffeo, and Nicolo set off for Venice.

They left the sea now, and journeyed overland till they saw, once more, the shores of their own blue Mediterranean. Taking ship they reached Venice after an absence of over twenty years. But, the story goes, they were so changed that no one could recognize them, or believe them in truth to be Nicolo, Maffeo and Marco Polo. So they held a great feast and to it invited their relations. One course followed another and as each course was served the three travellers left the room, returning each time in different and more gorgeous robes, till at the serving of the last course they entered in their discoloured travelling clothes. Then, before their astonished guests, they ripped up the seams of their stained garments, and from the linings there fell on the floor a cascade of jewels. When the guests saw this wealth they changed their minds, and admitted that, after all, these strangers were the Polos.

A year after the traveller's return, Venice went to war with the neighbouring city of Genoa, and among those who fought was Marco Polo. He was captured and kept for three years in prison, where he spent his time in writing an account of his travels. After his release he came home to Venice, where he lived quietly for the rest of his life, telling his traveller's tales of how--

> "In Xanadu did Kublai Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree:
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
> Through caverns measureless to man
> Down to a sunless sea."

---

**NOTES**

The story is taken from "Beyond the Sunset: A Book of Explorers" in which the authors, Elspeth J. Boog-Watson and J. Isabel Carruthers, have tried to tell the great adventures of the world simply, in such a way as to allow them to tell themselves, as all great stories should. They may stir boys and girls to a longing to know more, and to read fuller accounts of the stories told.

Marco Polo's "Travels" is one of the classics of world literature. It brings out the spirit of man which consists in adventures. This is basically the spirit of inquiry which compels man to extend his knowledge of the world beyond his own domains. Naturally, it involves the new knowledge of other peoples, their languages and cultures. This spirit of inquiry has all over history contributed to our knowledge of geography, history and culture.

| | |
|---|---|
| **"Sweet to ride forth......"** | lines from the poem "The Golden Road to Samarkand", by James Elroy Flecher. |
| **Samarkand:** | A great historic city of Central Asia known for its culture and trade, now part of the U.S.S.R. |
| **Constantinople:** | the chief port of modern Turkey, now called Istanbul; another great historic city, known for its mosques and culture. |
| **Bokhara:** | ancient city of Uzbek, U.S.S.R., on the old caravan route to China. |
| **Venice:** | one of the beautiful and historic Italian cities, known for its sculpture and painting. |
| **"In Xanadu did Kublai Khan"...** | lines from "Kublai Khan", a well-known poem by Coleridge. |
| **Down to a sunless sea":** | In this poem he described an ideal place much after the manner of paradise. His description was at least partly based on his readings of various Travels to the East. |

## EXERCISES

1. Describe the "The Road to the East" in your own words.
2. Discuss how the writers make this story interesting and readable.
3. Write an essay on the "Advantages of Travel" after reading this story.
4. Write a note on Kublai Khan.

*** ** * ** ***

# THE PUNISHMENT OF KHIPIL

*George Meredith*

They relate that Shahpesh, the Persian, commanded the building of a palace, and Khipil was the builder. The work lingered from the first year of the reign of Shahpesh even to his fourth. One day Shahpesh went to the riverside where it stood to inspect it. Khipil was sitting on a marble slab among the stones and blocks; round him stretched lazily the masons and stonecutters and slaves of burden; and they with the curve of humorous enjoyment on their lips, for he was reciting to them adventures, interspersed with anecdotes and recitations and poetic instances, as was his wont. They were like pleased flocks whom the shepherd hath led to a pasture freshened with brooks, there to feed indolently; he, the shepherd, in the midst.

Now, the King said to him, "O Khipil, show me my palace where it standeth, for I desire to gratify my sight with its fairness."

Khipil abased himself before Shahpesh, and answered, "Tis even here, O King of the age, where thou delightest the earth with thy foot and the ear of thy slave with sweetness. Surely a site of vantage, one that dominateth earth, air, and water, which is the builder's first and chief requisition for a noble palace, a palace to fill foreign kings and sultans with the distraction of envy; and it is, O Sovereign of the time, a site, this site I have chosen, to occupy the tongues of travellers and awaken the flights of poets!"

Shahpesh smiled and said, "The site is good! I laud the site!"

Then said he, "O Khipil, my builder, there was once a farm-servant that, having neglected in the seed-time to sow, took to singing the richness of his soil when it was harvest, in proof of which he displayed the abundance of weeds that coloured the land everywhere. Discover to me now the completeness of my halls and apartments, I pray thee, O Khipil, and be the excellence of thy consturction made visible to me!"

Quoth Khipil, 'To hear is to obey.'

He conducted Shahpesh among the unfinished saloons and imperfect courts and roofless rooms, and by half-erected obelisks, and columns pierced and chipped, of the palace of his building. And he was bewildered at the words spoken by Shahpesh; but now the King exalted him, and admired the perfection of his craft, the greatness of his labour, the speediness of his consturction, his assiduity; feigning not to behold his negligence.

Presently they went up winding balusters to a marble terrace, and the King said, "Such is thy devotion and constancy in toil, O Khipil, that thou shalt walk before me here."

He then commanded Khipil to precede him, and Khipil was heightened with the honour. When Khipil had paraded a short space he stopped quickly, and said to Shahpesh, "Here is, as it chanceth, a gap, O King! and we can go no further this way."

Shahpesh said, "All is perfect, and it is my will thou delay not to advance."

Khipil cried, "The gap is wide, O Mighty King, and manifest, and it is an incomplete part of thy palace."

Then said Shahpesh, "O Khipil, I see no distinction between one part and another; excellent are all parts in beauty and proportion, and there can be no part incomplete in this palace that occupieth the builder four years in its building: so advance, do my bidding."

Khipil yet hesitated, for the gap was of many strides, and at the bottom of the gap was a deep water, and he one that knew not the motion of swimming. But Shahpesh ordered his guard to point their arrows in the direction of Khipil, and Khipil stepped forward hurriedly, and fell in the gap, and was swallowed by the water below. When he rose the second time, succour reached him, and he was drawn to land trembling, his teeth chattering. And Shahpesh praised him, and said, "This is an apt contrivance for a bath, Khipil, O my builder! well conceived: one that taketh by surprise; and it shall be thy reward daily when much talking hath fatigued thee."

Then he bade Khipil lead him to the hall of state. And when they were there Shahpesh said, "For a privilege, and as a mark of my approbation, I give thee permission to sit in the marble chair of yonder throne, even in my presence, O Khipil."

Khipil said, "Surely, O King, the chair is not yet executed."

And Shahpesh exclaimed, "If this be so, thou art but the length of thy measure on the ground, O talkative one!"

Khipil said, "Nay, 'tis not so, O King of Splendours!blind that I am! yonder's indeed the chair.'

And Khipil feared the King, and went to the place where the chair should be, and bent his body in a sitting posture, eyeing the King, and made pretence to sit in the chair of Shahpesh, as in conspiracy to amuse his master.

Then, said Shahpesh, "For a token that I approve thy execution of the chair, thou shalt be honoured by remaining seated in it up to the hour of noon; but move thou to the right or to the left, showing thy soul insensible of the honour done thee, transfixed thou shalt be with twenty arrows and five."

The King then left him with a guard of twenty-five of his body-guard; and they stood around him with bent bows, so that Khipil dared not move from his sitting posture. And the masons and the people crowded to see Khipil sitting on his master's chair, for it became rumoured about. When they beheld him sitting upon nothing, and he trembling to stir for fear of the loosening of the arrows, they laughed so that they rolled upon the floor of the hall, and the echoes of laughter were a thousandfold. Surely the arrows of the guards swayed with the laughter that shook them.

Now, when the time had expired for his sitting in the chair, Shahpesh returned to him, and he was cramped,pitiable to see; and Shahpesh said, "Thou has been exalted above men, O Khipil! for that thou didst execute for thy master has been found fitting for thee."

Then, he bade Khipil lead the way to the noble gardens of dalliance and pleasure that he had planted and contrived. And Khipil went in that state described by the poet, when we go draggingly, with remonstrating members,

Knowing a dreadful strength behind,
And a dark fate before.

They came to the gardens, and behold, these were full of weeds and nettles, the fountains dry, no tree to be seen-a desert. And Shahpesh cried, "This is indeed of admirable design, O Khipil! Feelest thou not the coolness of the fountains?--their refreshingness? Truly I am grateful to thee! And these flowers, pluck me now a handful, and tell me of their perfume."

Khipil plucked a handful of the nettles that were there in the place of flowers, and put his nose to them before Shahpesh, till his nose was reddened; and desire to rub it waxed in him, and possessed him, and became a passion, so that he could scarce refrain from rubbing it even in the King's presence. And the King encouraged him to sniff and enjoy their fragrance.

Then Shahpesh laughed, and cried, 'Chafe not! it is an ill thing and a hideous.This nosegay, O Khipil, it is for thee to present to thy wife. Truly she will receive thee well after its presentation! I will have it now sent in thy name, with word that thou followest quickly. And for thy nettled nose, surely if the whim seizes thee that thou desirest its chafing, to thy neighbour is permitted what to thy hand is refused."

The King set a guard upon Khipil to see that his orders were executed, and appointed a time for him to return to the gardens.

At the hour indicated, Khipil stood before Shahpesh again. He was pale, saddened; his tongue drooped like the tongue of a heavy bell, that when it soundeth giveth forth mournful sounds only: he had also the look of one battered with many beatings. So the King said, "How of the presentation of the flowers of thy culture, O Khipil?"

He answered, "Surely, O King, she received me with wrath, and I am shamed by her."

And the King said, "How of my clemency in the matter of the chafing?"

Khipil answered, "O King of Splendours! I made petition to my neighbours whom I met, accosting them civilly and with imploring, for I ached to chafe, and it was the very raging thirst of desire to chafe that was mine, devouring eagerness for solace of chafing. And they chafed me, O King; yet not in those parts which throbbed for the chafing, but in those which abhorred it."

Then Shahpesh smiled and said, "Tis certain that the magnanimity of monarchs is as the rain that falleth, the sun that shineth: and in this spot it fertilizeth richness; in that encourageth rankness. So art thou but a weed, O Khipil! and my grace is thy chastisement".

Now, the King ceased not persecuting Khipil, under pretence of doing him honour and heaping favours on him. Three days and three nights was Khipil gasping without water, compelled to drink of the drought of the fountain, as an honour at the hands of the King. And he was seven days and seven nights made to stand with stretched arms, as they were the branches of a tree, in each hand a pomegranate. And Shahpesh brought the people of his court to regard the wondrous pomegranate-shoot planted by Khipil, very wondrous, and a new sort, worthy the gardens of a King. So the wisdom of the King was applauded, and men wotted he knew how to punish offences in coin, by the punishment inflicted on Khipil, the builder. Before that time his affairs had languished, and the currents of business instead of flowing had become stagnant pools. It was the fashion to do as did Khipil, and fancy the tongue a constructor rather than a commentator; and there is a doom upon that people and that man which runneth to seed in gabble.

Truly after Khipil's punishment there were few in the dominions of Shahpesh who sought to win the honours bestowed by him on gabblers and idlers.

And whoso is punished after the fashion of Shahpesh, the Persian, on Khipil, the Builder, is said to be one 'in the Palace of the Wagging Tongue' to this time.

## NOTES

George Meredith (1828-1909) is one of the major novelists of Victorian England. "The Egoist" is his greatest novel. He was also a poet.

The present story is taken from "The Shaving of Shagpat: An Arabian Entertainment". These are burlesque fantasies. A fantasy is an unreal imaginary story; a burlesque is a piece of writing which mockingly imitates another writing or situation and exposes it to ridicule. Thus a burlesque fantasy is an imaginary story which very strongly ridicules a character or a situation. In the last analysis, it has a purpose, moral or social.

"The Punishment of Khipil" is a burlesque fantasy. It makes fun of Khipil, the builder who had a good time at the expense of the King. Khipil ignored his work altogether, and instead enjoyed relating stories and songs to the workers and others. He was therefore an unreal character. The King made fun of him by a make-believe; and this is what makes this story a fantasy.

Shahpesh led him into a certain belief and inflicted great tortures upon Khipil who had no choice but to suffer them. It is a burlesque in that it makes fun of the builder and exposes him to ridicule. The unreal situation is taken as real by the King. Everybody is thus made to laugh at Khipil and later quote him as symbol of fun and laughter.

This treatment of Khipil had a corrective influence on the people. This story has therefore a moral purpose.

| | |
|---|---|
| **obelisk:** | A tall, pointed, four-sided stone pillar, set up as a monument or landmark. |
| **baluster:** | upright support or pillar for a rail. |
| **nettle:** | a common wild plant which has on its leaves hairs that sting and redden the skin when touched. |
| **chafe:** | rub the skin to get warmth; make or become rough or sore by rubbing. |
| **flowers of thy culture:** | flowers that had been grown; also a dig on culture or refinement of Khipil. Note the pun on the word 'culture'. |
| **pomegranate:** | a tree with thick-skinned round fruit which, when ripe has a reddish centre full of seeds. |
| **wot:** | know. |
| **Wagging Tongue:** | a person who talks lightly, full of amusing sayings and fond of practical jokes; even scandalous. |

## EXERCISES

1. Draw a character sketh of Khipil, the builder.
2. Describe how the King Shahpesh made fun of Khipil and punished him.
3. Write a note on Shahpesh.
4. Why is this story called a burlesque fantasy? Substantiate your answer by referring to the relevant details of the story.

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# THE DOLL'S HOUSE

*Katherine Mansfield*

When dear old Mrs. Hay went back to town after staying with the Burnells she sent the children a doll's house. It was so big that the carter and Pat carried it into the courtyard, and there it stayed, propped up on two wooden boxes beside the feed-room door. No harm could come to it; it was summer. And perhaps the smell of paint would have gone off by the time it had to be taken in. For, really, the smell of paint coming from that doll's house ("Sweet of old Mrs. Hay, of course; most sweet and generous!")--but the smell of paint was quite enough to make anyone seriously ill, in Aunt Beryl's opinion.

There stood the doll's house, a dark, oily, spinach green, picked out with bright yellow. Its two solid little chimneys, glued on to the roof, were painted red and white, and the door, gleaming with yellow varnish, was like a little slab of toffee. Four windows, real windows, were divided into panes by a broad streak of green. There was actually a tiny porch, too, painted yellow, with big lumps of congealed paint hanging along the edge.

But perfect, perfect little house! Who could possibly mind the smell. It was part of the joy, part of the newness.

"Open it quickly, someone!"

The hook at the side was stuck fast. Pat prized it open with his penknife, and the whole house front swung back, and--there you were, gazing at one and the same moment into the drawing-room and dining-room, the kitchen and two bedrooms.That is the way for a house to open! Why don't all houses open like that! How much more exciting than peering through the slit of a door into a mean little hall with a hatstand and two umbrellas! that is--isn't it?--what you long to know about a house when you put your hand on the knocker.

"O--oh!" the Burnell children sounded as though they were in despair. It was too marvellous; it was too much for them. They had never seen anything like it in their lives. All the rooms were papered. There were pictures on the walls, painted on the paper, with gold frames complete. Red carpet covered all the floors except the kitchen; red plush chairs in the drawing-room, green in the dining-room; tables, bed with real bedclothes, a cradle, a stove, a dresser with tiny plates and one big jug. But what Kezia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully, was the lamp. It stood in the middle of the dining-room table, an exquisite little lamp with a white globe. It was even filled all ready for lighting, though, of course, you couldn't light it. But there was something inside that looked like oil and moved when you shook it.

The father and mother dolls, who sprawled very stiff as though they had fainted in the drawing-room, and their two little children asleep upstairs, were really too big for the doll's house. But the lamp was perfect. It seemed to smile at Kezia, to say, "I live here." The lamp was real.

The Burnell children could hardly walk to school fast enough the next morning. They burned to tell everybody, to describe, to--well to boast about their doll's house before the school-bell rang.

"I'm to tell," said Isabel, "because I'm the eldest. And you two can join in after. But I'm to tell first."

There was nothing to answer. Isabel was bossy, but she was always right, and Lottie and Kezia knew too well the powers that went with being eldest. They brushed through the thick buttercups at the road edge and said nothing.

"And I'm to choose who's to come and see it first. Mother said I might."

For it had been arranged that while the doll's house stood in the courtyard they might ask the girls at school, two at a time, to come and look. Not to stay to tea, of course, or to come trapesing through the house. But just to stand quietly in the courtyard while Isabel pointed out the beauties, and Lottie and Kezia looked pleased....

But hurry as they might, by the time they had reached the barred palings of the boys' playground the bell had begun to jangle. They only just had time to whip off their hats and fall into line before the roll was called. Never mind. Isabel tried to make up for it by looking very important and mysterious and by whispering behind her hand to the girls near her. "Got something to tell you at playtime."

Playtime came and Isabel was surrounded. The girls of her class nearly fought to put their arms round her, to walk away with her, to beam flatteringly, to be her special friend. She held quite a court under the huge pine trees at the side of the play-ground. Nudging, giggling together, the little girls pressed up close. And the only two who stayed outside the ring were the two who were always outside, the little Kelveys. They knew better than to come anywhere near the Burnells.

For the fact was, the school the Burnell children went to was not at all the kind of place their parents would have chosen if there had been any choice. But there was none. It was the only school for miles. And the consequence was, all the children of the neighbourhood, the Judge's little girls, the doctor's daughters, the store-keeper's children, the milkman's, were forced to mix together. Not to speak of there being an equal number of rude, rough little boys as well. But the line had to be drawn somewhere. It was drawn at the Kelveys. Many of the children, including the Burnells, were not allowed even to speak to them. They walked past the Kelveys with their heads in the air, and as they set the fashion in all matters of behaviour, the Kelveys were shunned by everybody. Even the teacher had a special voice for them, and a special smile for the other children when Lil Kelvey came up to her desk with a bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers.

They were the daughters of a spry, hardworking little washerwoman, who went about from house to house by the day. This was awful enough. But where was Mr. Kelvey? Nobody knew for certain. But everybody said he was in prison. So they were the daughters of a washerman and a gaolbird. Very nice company for other people's children! And they looked it. Why Mrs. Kelvey made them so conspicuous was hard to understand. The truth was they were dressed in 'bits' given to her by the people for whom she worked. Lil was a stout, plain child, with big freckles. And her little sister our Else, was a tiny wishbone of a child--a little white owl. Nobody had ever seen her smile; she scarcely ever spoke. She went through life holding on to Lil, with a piece of Lil's skirt screwed up in her hand. Where Lil went, our Else followed. In the play-ground, on the road going to and from school, there was Lil marching in front and our Else holding on behind. Only when she wanted anything, or when she was out of breath, our Else gave Lil a tug, and Lil stopped and turned round. The Kelveys never failed to understand each other.

Now they hovered at the edge; you couldn't stop them listening. When the little girls turned round and sneered, Lil, as usual, gave her silly, shamefaced smile, but our Else only looked.

And Isabel's voice, so very proud, went on telling. The carpet made a great sensation, but so did the beds with real bedclothes, and the stove with an oven door.

When she finished Kezia broke in. "You've forgotten the lamp, Isabel."

"Oh!, Yes," said Isabel," and there's a teeny little lamp all made of yellow glass, with a white globe that stands on the dining-room table. You couldn't tell it from a real one."

"The lamp's best of all," cried Kezia. She thought Isabel wasn't making half enough of the little lamp. But nobody paid any attention. Isabel was choosing the two who were to come back with them that afternoon and see it. She chose Emmie Cole and Lena Logan. But when the others knew they were all to have a chance, they couldn't be nice enough to Isabel. One by one they put their arms round Isabel's waist and walked her off. They had something to whisper to her, a secret. "Isabel's my friend."

Only the little Kelveys moved away forgotten; there was nothing more for them to hear.

Days passed, and as more children saw the doll's house, the fame of it spread. It became the one subject, the rage. The one question was, "Have you seen Burnell's doll's house? Oh, ain't it lovely!" "Haven't you seen it? Oh, I say!"

Even the dinner hour was given up to talking about it. The little girls sat under the pines eating their thick mutton sandwiches and big slabs of johnny cake spread with butter. While always, as near as they could get, sat the Kelveys, our Else holding on to Lil, listening too, while they chewed their jam sandwiches out of a news-paper.

"Mother," said Kezia, "can't I ask the Kelveys just once?"

"Certainly not, Kezia."

"But why not?"

"Run away, Kezia: you know quite well why not."

At last everybody had seen it except them. On that day the subject rather flagged. It was the dinner hour. The children stood together under the pine trees, and suddenly, as they looked at the Kelveys eating out of their papers, always by themselves, always listening, they wanted to be horrid to them. Emmie Cole started the whisper.

"Lil Kelvey's going to be a servant when she grows up."

"O-oh, how awful!" said Isabel Burnell, and she made eyes at Emmie.

Emmie swallowed in a very meaning way

and nodded to Isabel as she'd seen her mother do on those occasions.

"It's true--it's true--it's true," she said.

Then Lena Logan's little eye snapped. "Shall I ask her?" she whispered.

"Bet you don't," said Jessie May.

"Pooh, I'm not frightened," said Lena.

Suddenly she gave a little squeal and danced in front of other girls. "Watch! Watch me! Watch me now!" said Lena. And sliding; gliding, dragging one foot, giggling behind her hand, Lena went over to the Kelveys.

Lil looked up from her dinner. She wrapped the rest quickly away. Our Else stopped chewing. What was coming now?

"Is it true you're going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?" shrilled Lena.

Dead silence. But instead of answering Lil only gave her silly shamefaced smile. She didn't seem to mind the question at all. What a sell for Lena! The girls began to titter.

Lena couldn't stand that. She put her hands on her hips; she shot forward. "Yah, yer father's in prison!" she hissed, spitefully.

This was such a marvellous thing to have said that the little girls rushed away in a body, deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy. Some one found a long rope, and they began skipping. And never did they skip so high, run in and out so fast, or do such daring things as on that morning.

In the afternoon Pat called for the Burnell children with the buggy and they drove home. There were visitors. Isabel and Lottie, who liked visitors, went upstairs to change their pinafores.

But Kezia thieved out at the back. Nobody was about; she began to swing on the big white gates of the courtyard. Presently, looking along the road, she saw two little dots. They grew bigger, they were coming towards her. Now she could see that one was in front and one close behind. Now she could see that they were the Kelveys. Kezia stopped swinging. She slipped off the gate as if she was going to run away. Then she hesitated. The Kelveys came nearer, and beside them walked their shadows, very long, stretching right across the road with their heads in the butter cups. Kezia clambered back on the gate; she had made up her mind; she swung out.

"Hullow," she said to the passing Kelveys.

They were so astounded that they stopped.

Lil gave her silly smile. Our Else stared.

"You can come and see our doll's house if you want to," said Kezia, and she dragged one toe on the ground. But at that Lil turned red and shook her head quickly.

"Why not?" asked Kezia.

Lil gasped, then she said, "Your ma told our ma you wasn't to speak to us."

"Ah, well," said Kezia, she didn't know what to reply, "It doesn't matter. You can come and see our doll's house all the same. Come on. Nobody's looking."

But Lil shook her head still harder.

"Don't you want to?" asked Kezia.

Suddenly there was a twitch, a tug at Lil's skirt. She turned round. Our Else was looking at her with big imploring eyes; she was frowning; she wanted to go. For a moment Lil looked at our Else very doubtfully. But then our Else twitched her skirt again. She started forward, Kezia led the way. Like two little stray cats they followed across the courtyard to where the doll's house stood.

"There it is," said Kezia.

There was a pause, Lil breathed loudly, almost snorted; our Else was still as stone.

"I'll open it for you," said Kezia kindly. She undid the hook and they looked inside.

"There's the drawing-room and the dining-room, and that's the..."

"Kezia!"

Oh, what a start they gave!

"Kezia"!

It was Aunt Beryl's voice. They turned round. At the back door stood Aunt Beryl, staring as if she couldn't believe what she saw.

"How dare you ask the little Kelveys into the courtyard?" said her cold, furious voice. "You know as well as I do, you're not allowed to talk to them. Run away, children, run away at once. And don't come back again," said Aunt Beryl. And she stepped into the yard and shooed them out as if they were chickens.

"Off you go immediately!" she called, cold and proud.

They did not need telling twice. Burning with shame, shrinking together, somehow they crossed the big courtyard and squeezed through the white gate.

"Wicked, disobedient little girl!" said Aunt Beryl bitterly to Kezia.

When the Kelveys were well out of sight of Burnells, they sat down to rest on a big red drainpipe by the side of the road. Lil's cheeks were still burning. Dreamily they looked over the paddocks, past the creek, to the group of wattles where Logan's cows stood waiting to be milked. What were their thoughts?

Presently our Else nudged up close to her sister. But now she had forgotten the cross lady. She put out a finger and stroked her sister's hat; she smiled her rare smile.

"I seen the little lamp," she said softly.

Then both were silent once more.

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**NOTES**

Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) was born in Wellington of rich parents. She received an allowance from her father all her life. After her schooling she attended Queen's College, London, for four years and after two years' stay at home she left for New Zealand for ever. In London, she ultimately married John Middleton Murray.

She is remarkable for her freshness of approach and her apparently casual but beautifully coloured method which she had learnt from Chekhov. Though her range is even more limited than that of Jane Austen, she was able to express the universality of experience. It is always of a family or a small group and its subtle inter-relationships bound together by bonds of emotions, that she writes. She wrote nothing that was not her personal experience and thus almost all her writings are rooted in New Zealand.

"The Doll's House" is one of her representative stories. The doll's house gives the Burnell girls an occasion for displaying their aristocracy and for extending the courtesy of an invitation to their school fellows to come to their place and have the pleasure of actually seeing it. Isabel, Lottie and Kezia are knit in a sisterly relationship in which the initiative lies with Isabel, the eldest.

The story beautifully brings out the intimate and childishly emotional, at places even adolescent inter-relationships between the three sisters and their friends. The relationship of the girls with Kelveys, Lil and Else, presents a contrast to this. But we may again closely look at the relationship between the Kelvey sisters at least for a relief.

Finally Kezia invited the Kelveys when she saw them coming along the road. Her essential humanity asserted itself, though aunt Beryl later took her to task for this.

| | |
|---|---|
| **picked out with:** | adorned or beautified with. |
| **prized it open:** | forced it open. |
| **a dresser:** | kitchen side-board. |
| **wishbone of a child:** | a lean bony child (wishbone is the forked bone in front of the breastbone in most birds). |
| **wasnt's making half enough of the little lamp:** | was not sufficiently praising the lamp. |
| **the rage:** | the object of widespread, temporary enthusiasm or interest. |
| **johnny cake:** | cake of maize-meal or wheat-meal. |
| **a sell:** | (slang) a disappointment. |
| **wattle:** | a fence made of interlaced rods or twigs. |

## EXERCISES

1. Discuss how Katherine Mansfield describes the feelings and emotional relationships of the small girls in this story.
2. Give a brief description of the doll's house.
3. Explain how the writer makes this story really life-like?
4. Do you learn anything about young girls, from "The Doll's House"?

*** ** * ** ***

# THE STUFFED TROUT

*Jerome K. Jerome*

If ever you have an evening to spare, up the river, I should advise you to drop into one of the little village inns, and take a seat in the tap-room. You will be nearly sure to meet one or two old rod-men, and they will tell you enough fishy stories in half an hour to give you indigestion for a month.

George and I--I don't know what had become of Harris; he had gone out and had a shave, early in the afternoon, and had then come back and spent full forty minutes in pipe-claying his shoes, we had not seen him since--George and I, therefore, and the dog left to ourselves, went for a walk to Wallingford on the second evening, and, coming home, we called in at a little riverside inn, for a rest, and other things.

We went into the parlour and sat down. There was an old fellow there, smoking a long clay pipe, and we naturally began chatting.

He told us that it had been a fine day today, and we told him that it had been a fine day yesterday, and then we all told each other that we thought it would be a fine day tomorrow; and George said the crops seemed to be coming up nicely.

After that it came out, somehow or other, that we were strangers in the neighbourhood, and that we were going away the next morning.

Then a pause ensued in the conversation, during which our eyes wandered round the room. They finally rested upon a dusty old glass-case, fixed very high up above the chimney-piece, and containing a trout. It rather fascinated me, that trout; it was such a monstrous fish. In fact, at first glance, I thought it was a cod.

'Ah!' said the old gentleman, following the direction of my gaze, 'fine fellow that, ain't he?'

"Quite uncommon" I murmured; and George asked the old man how much he thought it weighed.

"Eighteen pounds six ounces," said our friend, rising and taking down his coat, "Yes", he continued, 'it w'ur sixteen years ago, come the third o' next month, that I landed him. I caught him just below the bridge with a minnow. They told me he w'ur in the river, and I said I'd have him, and so I did. You don't see many fish that size about here now, I'm thinking. Goodnight, gentlemen, goodnight.'

And out he went, and left us alone.

We could not take our eyes off the fish after that. It really was a remarkably fine fish. We were still looking at it, when the local carrier, who had just stopped at the inn, came to the door of the room and he also looked at the fish.

"Good-sized trout, that," said George, turning round to him.

"Ah! you may well say that, sir," replied the man; and then he added, "May be you wasn't here, sir, when that fish was caught?"

"No," we told him. We were strangers in the neighbourhood.

"Ah!" said the carrier, "then of course, how should you? It was nearly five years ago that I caught that trout."

"Oh!" was it you who caught it, then?" said I.

"Yes, sir," replied the genial old fellow. "I caught him just below the lock-leastways, what was the lock then, one Friday afternoon; and the remarkable thing about it is that I caught him with a fly. I'd gone out pike-fishing, bless you, never thinking of a trout, and when I saw that whopper on the end of my line, blest if it didn't quite take me back. Well, you see, he weighed twenty-six pounds. Goodnight, gentlemen, goodnight".

Five minutes afterwards, a third man came in, and described how he had caught it early one morning, with bleak; and then he left, and a stolid, solemn-looking, middle-aged individual came in, and sat down over by the window.

None of us spoke for a while; but, at length, George turned to the new-comer, and said:

"I beg your pardon, I hope you will forgive the liberty that we perfect strangers in the neighbourhood are taking, but my friend here and myself would be so much obliged if you would tell us how you caught that trout up there."

"Why, who told you I caught that trout?" was the surprised query.

We said that nobody had told us so, but somehow or other we felt instinctively that it was he who had done it.

"Well, it's a most remarkable thing--most remarkable," answered the stolid stranger, laughing; "because, as a matter of fact, you are quite right, I did catch it. But fancy your guessing it like that. Dear me, it's really a most remarkable thing".

And then he went on, and told us how it had taken him half an hour to land it, and how it had broken his rod. He said he had weighed it carefully when he reached home, and it had turned the scale at thirty-four pounds.

He went in his turn, and when he was gone, the landlord came in to us. We told him the various histories we had heard about his trout, and he was immensely amused, and we all laughed very heartily.

"Fancy Jim Bates and Joe Muggles and Mr. Jones and old Billy Maunders all telling you that they had caught it. Ha! ha! ha! Well, that is good," said the honest old fellow, laughing heartily. "Yes, they are the sort to give it me, to put up in my parlour, if they had caught it, they are Ha! ha! ha!"

And then he told us the real history of the fish. It seemed that he had caught it himself, years ago, when he was quite a lad; not by any art or skill but by that unaccountable luck that appears to always wait upon a boy when he plays the wag from school, and goes out fishing on a sunny afternoon, with a bit of string tied on to the end of a tree.

He said that bringing home that trout had saved him from a whacking, and that even his school master had said it was worth the rule of three and practice put together.

He was called out of the room at this point, and George and I again turned our gaze upon the fish.

It really was a most astonishing trout. The more we looked at it, the more we marvelled at it.

It excited George so much that he climbed up on the back of a chair to get a better view of it.

And then the chair slipped, and George clutched wildly at the trout-case to save himself, and down it came with a crash, George and the chair on top of it.

"You haven't injured the fish, have you?" I cried in alarm, rushing up.

"I hope not," said George, rising cautiously and looking about.

But he had. The trout lay shattered into a thousand fragments--I say a thousand, but they may have been only nine hundred. I did not count them.

We thought it strange and unaccountable that a stuffed trout should break up into little pieces like that.

And so it would have been strange and un-accountable, if it had been a stuffed trout, but it was not.

That trout was plaster of Paris.

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## NOTES

Jerome K. Jerome (1859-1927), is a novelist and playwright. His "Three Men in a Boat" from which "The Stuffed Trout" is taken, appeared in 1889. "Three Men in a Boat" is popular all over the world for its blending of humour and sentiment; it has been translated into many languages.

"The Stuffed Trout" brings out the make-believe of the old fishermen and how they would like to relate their imaginary achievements. The description is realistic, vivid but tinged with an irony which nowhere becomes obtrusive. It creates a situation which is humorous for we would like to believe that the fishermen are naive and not crafty. The reality to the whole situation is lent by a sheer accident.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Pipe-claying:** | fine white clay with which he was polishing his shoes. |
| **minnow:** | very small fish. |
| **lock:** | confined section of canal at point where level changes for raising and lowering boats by use of sluiced gates. |
| **fly:** | a fishing bait. |
| **whopper:** | a very large thing. |
| **plays the wag from school:** | who is a truant; does not go to the school but plays about. |

The rule of three: the method of finding the fourth term of proportion when three are given.

Practice: In Arithmetic a compendious way of multiplying quantities involving several units by means of aliquots parts

## EXERCISES

1. Bring out the humour in "The Stuffed Trout"
2. Describe the story in your own words as interestingly as the writer has done.
3. What is your opinion of various characters in the story?
4. How does Jerome K. Jerome combine sentiment with humour in this story?

*** ** * ** ***

# THE RED SHOES

*Hans Christian Andersen*

There was once a little girl, very delicate and pretty, and yet so poor that in summer she always had to go barefooted and in winter she had to wear big wooden clogs which chafed her insteps most horribly, until they were quite red.

In the middle of the village lived a shoemaker's widow, who had some strips of old red cloth, and out of these she did her best to sew a little pair of shoes. They were rather clumsy-looking shoes, but the old widow meant well; they were for the little girl, whose name was Karen. As it happened, she got the red shoes and put them on for the first time on the very day that her mother was buried. Of course they weren't exactly the right shoes for a funeral, but they were the only ones she had; and so she wore them on her bare feet, as she followed the humble straw coffin.

Just then a large old-looking carriage drove up with a large old-looking lady inside it. She caught sight of the little girl and felt sorry for her. So she said to the parson: "Look here, if you let me have the little girl, I'll take care of her."

Karen thought this was all becuase of the red shoes, but the old lady said they were hideous and had them burnt; Karen herself was given nice new clothes and was taught to read and sew. People said how pretty she was, but the looking-glass said to her: "You are more than pretty, you are lovely."

On one occasion the Queen was passing through the country with her little daughter, who was a Princess. People flocked around the castle, and Karen was there too; and the little Princess showed herself at one of the windows. She was wearing a beautiful white dress; no train nor golden crown, but lovely red morocco shoes--far, far prettier than the ones the shoemaker's widow had made for little Karen. No, there was really nothing in the world like red shoes.

By now Karen was old enough to be confirmed. She was given new clothes, and she was also to have new shoes. The best shoemaker in town took the measurement of her feet in his own private room, where there were big glass cabinets with elegant shoes and shiny boots. They made a brave show, but the old lady's sight was far from good, and so it gave her no pleasure. Among the shoes was a red pair just like the ones the Princess had been wearing--oh, they were pretty! The shoemaker explained that they had been made for an earl's daughter but didn't quite fit. "That must be patent leather from the way they shine," said the old lady.

"Yes, don't they shine!" said Karen; and as they were a good fit, the shoes were bought. But the old lady didn't realise that they were red, for she would never have allowed Karen to go to Confirmation in red shoes. And yet that's just what happened.

Everybody stared at her feet and, as she walked up the aisle she felt that even the old pictures over the tombs, those portraits of the clergy and their wives in stiff ruffs and long black garments, were fastening their eyes on the red shoes. It was these that filled her thoughts, when the priest laid his hand on her head and spoke of holy baptism and of her duty now to become a fully-fledged Christian. And the organ played so solemnly, and the children sang so beautifully, and the old choirmaster sang too; but Karen thought of nothing but her red shoes.

By the afternoon, sure enough, the old lady had heard from everybody about the shoes being red, and she said how shocking it was; they were quite out of place and in future, when Karen went to church, she must always wear black shoes, however old they were.

Next Sunday there was Communion, and Karen looked at the black shoes, and she looked at the red ones....And then she looked at the red ones again--and put the red ones on.

It was a beautiful sunny day. Karen and the old lady took the path through the cornfield, where it was a bit dusty. At the churchdoor stood an old soldier with a crutch and a funny long beard which was more red than white--in fact, it really was red. He made a deep bow to the old lady and asked if he might dust her shoes. And when Karen also put out her feet, "My! what lovely dancing-shoes!" said the soldier. "Stay on tight when you dance!" and he gave the soles a tap with his hand.

The old lady gave the soldier something for himself and went with Karen into the church. The whole congregation stared at Karen's red shoes, and so did all the portraits; and when Karen knelt before the altar she thought of nothing but the red shoes--it seemed as if they were floating in front of her. She forgot to sing the hymns, and she forgot to say the prayers.

Presently everyone came out of church, and the old lady stepped into her carriage. As Karen raised her foot to get in after her, the old soldier, who was standing close by, said" "My! what lovely dancing-shoes!" Karen couldn't resist--she had to dance a few steps and, once she had started, her feet went on dancing just as though the shoes had some power over them. She danced round the corner of the church--she could'nt stop; the coachman had to run after her and pick her up and carry her back into the carriage. But still her feet went on dancing and gave the kind old lady some dreadful kicks. At last they got the shoes off, and her legs kept still.

When they came home, the shoes were put away in a cupboard, but Karen still kept taking a peep at them. By and by the old lady fell ill; it was said she would never get better. She had to be nursed and cared for, and nobody was more suited for this than Karen. But a big ball was being given in the town, and Karen was invited. She looked at the old lady, who after all couldn't live long, and she looked at the red shoes. She put on the red shoes, she had a perfect right to do that...But then she went to the ball and began to dance.

But when she wanted to go to the right, the shoes went dancing off to the left; and when she wanted to go up the room, the shoes went dancing down the room--down the stairs through the street and out by the town-gate. Dance she did and dance she must, away into the dark forest.

Up among the trees she saw something shining. It looked like a face, and so she thought it was the moon; but it was the old soldier with the red beard, sitting and nodding and saying: "My! what lovely dancing-shoes!"

This made her frightened, and she tried to kick off the red shoes, but they still stuck on tight. She tore off her stockings, but the shoes had grown fast to her feet, and so dance she did and dance she must, over field and furrow, in rain and sun, by night and day; but the night-time was the worst.

She danced into the open churchyard, but the dead there didn't dance; they had something better to do. She wanted to sit down by the poor man's grave, where the bitter tansy grew; but peace and quiet were not for her and, when she danced towards the open church-door, she found an angel there in long white robes and with wings reaching from his shoulders to the ground. His face was stern and solemn, and in his hand he held a sword with broad shining blade.

"Dance you shall," said the angel, 'dance in your red shoes until you are cold and pale, until your skin shrivels up like a skeleton's! Dance you shall from door to door, and at all the houses where the children are vain and proud you shall knock till they hear you and are frightened. You shall dance, you shall dance...!"

"Mercy! Mercy!" cried Karen. But she never heard the angel's answer, for the shoes whirled her away through the gate and the field, along highway and byway, dancing, dancing, all the time.

One morning she danced past a door she knew well. From inside came the sound of a hymn; then out came a coffin all covered with flowers. She realised then that the old lady was dead, and she felt that now she was deserted by everyone, as well as cursed by the angel of God.

Dance she did and dance she must, dance on in the dark night...The shoes whirled her away over thorns and stubble, until she was scratched and bleeding. She danced across the heath up to a lonely little house, and she rapped the window-pane with her knuckles and said: "Please come out! I can't come in, because I'm dancing."

"Do you mean to say you don't know who I am? I cut off wicked people's heads--my goodness, how my axe is quivering!"

"Please don't cut off my head!" said Karen, "for then I can't show that I'm sorry for my sins. Cut off my feet with the red shoes."

Then she confessed all her sins, and the executioner cut off her feet with the red shoes. But the shoes went dancing with the little feet across the fields into the depths of the forest. And he made her wooden feet and crutches; he taught her a hymn--the Psalm for Sinners--and she kissed the hand that had wielded the axe and went her way across the heath.

"Surely by now I must have done penance for the red shoes," she said, "I'll go to church and let everyone see me." And she did; she went quickly towards the church-door but, when she reached it, there were the red shoes dancing in front of her, and she grew frightened and turned back.

All the next week she was miserable and did nothing but cry, but when Sunday came round she said to herself; "Dear me, I really feel I've been through enough. Surely I'm just as good as many of those that sit so perkily there in church." And she plucked up her courage and started off, but she got no further than the gate, when she saw the red shoes dancing in front of her, and she grew frightened and turned back and repented deeply of her sins.

Next she made her way to the parsonage and asked to be taken in there as a servant; she would work so hard and do her very best. She never gave a thought to the wages, only that she might have a roof over her head and be with kind people.

The parson's wife felt sorry for her and took her into her service and found her hard-working and sensible. In the evenings Karen sat and listened in silence, while the parson read aloud from the Bible. All the little ones were very fond of her but, when there was talk of dress and finery and of being as pretty as a picture, she would shake her head.

The following Sunday they all went to church, and they asked her to go with them; but with tears in her eyes she looked sadly at her crutches and, when the others went off to hear the word of God, she went alone to her tiny room, where there was just enough space for a bed and a chair, and here she sat devoutly reading her prayer-book. As she did so, the wind brought the sound of the organ to her from the church, and her eyes filled with tears as she lifted up her face, exclaiming: "Help me, O God!"

Then the sun came out so brightly, and straight in front of her stood the same angel in white robes that she had seen that night at the church-door. But instead of the sharp sword he was holding a beautiful green bough that was covered with roses; and he touched the ceiling with it so that it arched itself higher, and where he touched it there shone a golden star. And he touched the walls so that they grew wider; and she saw the organ which was still playing, she saw the old pictures of the clergy and their wives, and the congregation sitting in the carved pews and singing from their hymn-books...You see, the church itself had come to the poor girl in her narrow little room--or was it she who had come to the church? She was sitting in the pew with all the others from the parsonage and, when they had finished the hymn and looked up from their books, they nodded to her and said: "It was right you should come, Karen." "It was God's mercy!" she answered.

And the organ pealed forth and the young voices of the choir sounded so soft and pure. The bright warm sunshine streamed in through the church-window to the place where Karen was sitting. Her heart was so full of sunshine and peace and joy that at last it broke, and her soul flew on the sun-beams to heaven, where there was no one to ask about the red shoes.

## NOTES

Hans Christian Andersen was born in Odense, in Denmark, on the 2nd April 1805. His father was a shoemaker and the home was very poor. Hans was a lonely child and he led a difficult life--his father joined the Napoleonic wars leaving his mother to struggle to feed the family, then, on the death of his father his mother remarried, leaving Hans even more alone.

Hans longed to join the theatre and in 1819 went to Copenhagen for this purpose. He got a job as an actor but soon lost it. However, one of the directors of the theatre, Jonas Collin, recognised his potential genius and gave him an education.

On passing his examination in 1827 he launched on his career as a writer. He wrote lyrical poetry and a travel book, both of which earned for him a certain degree of fame. He travelled greatly and by 1835 had published his first novel and his first fairy story. He wrote a number of novels all of which have been overshadowed by his masterpieces, the fairy-stories. These tales have spread his fame far beyond Denmark and have been translated into fifty languages.

The later years of his life were spent in travel and in writing--his genius was fully recognised and he was given great honours in Denmark and abroad. His life itself had a fairy-tale quality to it--he was born poor and solitary and then died happy and well-loved by all who had read his stories. He died in Copenhagen, in 1875. On his death a memorial statue was built, that of the little mermaid, which stands in the harbour of Copenhagen.

| | |
|---|---|
| **clogs:** | heavy, wooden shoes. |
| **to be confirmed:** | to be made a member of Christian Church. |
| **communion:** | a Christian ritual. |
| **tansy:** | herbs with bitter-tasting leaves. |
| **organ:** | musical instrument with keyboard and pipes supplied with wind. |
| **pews:** | high-backed wooden benches used in churches. |

## EXERCISES

1. Does Andersen make effective use of the fantasy to teach a moral lesson?
2. What do the red shoes symbolise?
3. State the moral of the story.
4. Write a brief story which conveys a moral lesson.

*** ** * ** ***

# SNAPSHOT OF A DOG

*James Thurber*

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I ran across a dim photograph of him the other day, going through some old things. He's been dead twenty-five years. His name was Rex (my two brothers and I named him when we were in our early teens) and he was a bull terrier. "An American bull terrier," we used to say, proudly; none of your English bulls. He had one brindle eye that some-times made him look like a clown and sometimes reminded you of a politician with Derby hat and cigar. The rest of him was white except for a brindle saddle that always seemed to be slipping off and a brindle stocking on a hind leg. Nevertheless, there was a nobility about him. He was big and muscular and beautifully made. He never lost his dignity even when trying to accomplish the extravagant tasks my brothers and myself used to set for him.

One of these was the bringing of a ten-foot wooden rail into the yard through the back gate. We would throw it out into the alley and tell him to go get it. Rex was as powerful as a wrestler, and there were not many things that he couldn't manage somehow to get hold of with his great jaws and lift or drag to wherever he wanted to put them, or wherever we wanted them put. He could catch the rail at the balance and lift it clear of the ground and trot with great confidence towards the gate. Of course, since the gate was only four feet wide or so, he couldn't bring the rail in broadside. He found that out when he got a few terrific jolts, but he wouldn't give up. He finally figured out how to do it, by dragging the rail holding on to one end, growling. He got a great, wagging satisfaction out of his work. We used to bet kids who had never seen Rex in action that he could catch a baseball thrown as high as they could throw it. He almost never let us down. Rex could hold a baseball with ease in his mouth, in one cheek, as if it were a chew of tobacco.

He was a tremendous fighter, but he never started fights. I don't believe he liked to get into them, despite the fact that he came from a line of fighters. He never went for another dog's throat but for one of its ears (that teaches a dog a lesson), and he would get his grip, close his eyes, and hold on. He could hold on for hours. His longest fight lasted from dusk until almost pitch-dark, one Sunday. It was fought in East Main Street in Columbus with a large, snarly nondescript that belonged to a big coloured man. When Rex finally got his ear grip, the brief whirlwind of snarling turned to screeching. It was frightening to listen to and to watch. The Negro boldly picked the dogs up somehow and began swinging them around his head, and finally let them fly like a hammer in a hammer throw, but although they landed ten feet away with a great plump, Rex still held on.

The two dogs eventually worked their way to the middle of the car tracks, and after a while two or three streetcars were held up by the fight. A motor-man tried to pry Rex's jaws open with a switch rod; somebody lighted a fire and made a torch of a stick and held that to Rex's tail, but he paid no attention. In the end, all the residents and storekeepers in the neighbourhood were on hand, shouting this, suggesting that. Rex's joy of battle, when battle was joined, was almost tranquil. He had a kind of pleasant expression during fights, not a vicious one, his eyes closed in what would have seemed to be sleep had it not been for the turmoil of the struggle. The Oak Street Fire Department finally had to be sent for--I don't know why nobody thought of it sooner. Five or six pieces of apparatus arrived, followed by a battalion chief. A hose was attached and a powerful stream of water was turned on the dogs. Rex held on for several moments more while the torrent buffeted him about like a log in a freshet. He was a hundred yards away from where the fight started when he finally let go.

The story of that Homeric fight got all around town, and some of our relatives looked upon the incident as a blot on the family name. They insisted that we get rid of Rex, but we were very happy with him, and nobody could have made us give him up. We would have left town with him first, along any road there was to go. It would have been different, perhaps, if he'd ever started off fights, or looked for trouble. But he had a gentle disposition. He never bit a person in the ten strenuous years that he lived, nor ever growled at anyone except prowlers. He killed cats, that is true, but quickly and neatly and without special malice, the way men kill certain animals. It was the only thing he did that we could never cure him of doing. He never killed, or even chased, a squirrel. I don't know why. He had his own philosophy about such things. He never ran barking after wagons or automobiles. He didn't seem to see the idea in pursuing something you couldn't catch, or something you couldn't do anything with, even if you did catch it. A wagon was one of the things he couldn't tug along with his mighty jaws, and he knew it. Wagons, therefore, were not a part of his world.

Swimming was his favourite recreation. The first time he ever saw a body of water (Alum Creek), he trotted nervously along the steep bank for a while, fell to barking wildly, and finally plunged in from a height of eight feet or more, I shall always remember that shining, virgin dive. Then he swam upstream and back just for the pleasure of it, like a man. It was fun to see him battle upstream against a stiff current, struggling and growling every foot of the way. He had as much fun in the water as any person I have known. You didn't have to throw a stick in the water to get him to go in. Of course, he would bring back a stick to you if you did throw one in. He would even have brought back a piano if you had thrown one in.

That reminds me of the night, way after midnight, when he went a-roving in the light of the moon and brought back a small chest of drawers that he found somewhere--how far from the house nobody ever knew; since it was Rex, it could easily have been half a mile. There were no drawers in the chest when he got it home, and it wasn't a good one--he hadn't taken it out of anybody's house; it was just an old cheap piece that somebody had abandoned on a trash heap. Still, it was something he wanted, probably because it presented a nice problem in transportation. It tested his mettle. We first knew about his achievement when, deep in the night, we heard him trying to get the chest up on to the porch. It sounded as if two or three people were trying to tear the house down. We came downstairs and turned on the porch light. Rex was on the top step trying to pull the thing up, but it had caught somehow and he was just holding his own. I suppose he would have held his own till dawn if we hadn't helped him. The next day we carted the chest miles away and threw it out. If we had thrown it out in a nearby alley, he would have brought it home again, as a small token of his integrity in such matters. After all, he had been taught to carry heavy wooden objects about,and he was proud of his prowess.

I am glad Rex never saw a trained police dog jump. He was just an amateur jumper himself, but the most daring and tenacious I have ever seen. He would take on any fence we pointed out to him. Six feet was easy for him and he could do eight by making a tremendous leap and hauling himself over finally by his paws, grunting and straining; but he lived and died without knowing that twelve and sixteen-foot walls were too much for him. Frequently, after letting him try to go over one for a while, we would have to carry him home. He would never have given up trying.

There was in his world no such thing as the impossible. Even death couldn't beat him down. He died, it is true, but only, as one of his admirers said, after 'straight-arming the death angel!' for more than an hour. Late one afternoon he wandered home, too slowly and too uncertainly to be the Rex that had trotted briskly homeward up our avenue for ten years. I think we all knew when he came through the gate that he was dying. He had apparently taken a terrible beating, probably from the owner of some dog that he had got into a fight with. His head and body were scarred. His heavy collar with the teeth marks of many a battle on it was awry; some of the big brass studs in it were sprung loose from the leather. He licked at our hands and, staggering, fell, but got up again. We could see that he was looking for someone. One of his three masters was not home. He did not get home for an hour. During that hour the bull terrier fought against death as he had fought against the cold strong current of Alum Creek, as he had fought to climb twelve-foot walls. When the person he was waiting for did come through the gate, whistling, ceasing to whistle, Rex walked a few wobbly paces towards him, touched his hand with his muzzle, and fell down again. This time he didn't get up.

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## NOTES

James Thurber is a famous and popular American writer and artist. His humorous prose and drawings are never gay because their enthusiasm is dampened by melancholy. His fantastic people and animals are distorted and mis-shapen by a malignant fate. Thurber has stated his artistic credo in these words: "Humour is a kind of emotional chaos talked about calmly and quietly in retrospect."

"Snapshot of a Dog" is taken from "The Thurber Carnival" which contains his most important work. Many of his writings and drawings deal with dogs. He understands them and he has the gift of being able to communicate his understanding to the reader.

This piece is typical of Thurber. It is both humorous and serious as his writings usually are. The story flows along easily and smoothly, and the reader has the impression that the writer is talking to him.

The writer looks upon the dog sympathetically and at times even affectionately. Rex was no doubt a dog of its own type who was fond of adventures. This account is as such written objectively.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Derby hat:** | bowler hat. |
| **Homeric fight:** | a heroic fight like the one described by Homer in his great epics; an ironical expression. |

## EXERCISES

1. Write a note on Rex bringing out his major qualities.
2. Narrate the adventures of Rex in your own words.
3. Does this story give you any insight into the psychology of dogs?
4. Write an essay on the dog as a domestic animal.

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# THE DINNER-PARTY

*Edward Verral Lucas*

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*The dinner-party was at Mr. Wynne's, the father of Naomi whom Kent Falconer marries. Mr. Dabney was a Radical editor. Lionel is a county cricketer.*

When the evening arrived, it looked as though Grandmamma and Mr. Dabney were going to hit it off perfectly, and I began to feel quite happy about my introduction of this firebrand into the household.

"I hear that you are a writer," Grandmamma began, very graciously. "I always like literary company. Years ago I met both Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray."

I saw the lid of Lionel's left eye droop as he glanced at Naomi. Mrs. Wynne, I gathered, was employing a favourite opening.

Mr. Dabney expressed interest.

"There are no books like theirs now." Grandmamma continued. "I don't know what kind of books you write, but there are no books like those of Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray."

Mr. Dabney began to say something.

"Personally," Grandmamma hurried on, "I

prefer those of Mr. Dickens, but that perhaps is because me dear fawther used to read them to us aloud. He was a beautiful reader. There is no reading aloud today, Mr. Dabney; and, I fear, very little home life."

Here Grandmamma made a false move and let her companion in, for he could never resist a comparison of the present and the past, to the detriment of the present.

"No," he said, "you are quite right." And such was the tension that Grandmamma's remarks had caused that the whole room was silent for him. "We are losing our hold on all that is most precious. Take London at this moment...... look at the scores and scores of attractions to induce people to leave home in the evenings and break up the family circle...restaurants, concert rooms, entertainments, theatres. Look at the music-halls. Do you know how many music-halls there are in London and Greater London at this moment?"

"No," said Grandmamma sternly, "I have no notion. I have never entered one."

Lionel shot a glance at me which distinctly id, in his own deplorable idiom, "What price ll Pinto?"

Mr. Dabney, I regret to say, intercepted the tail of it, and suddenly realized that he was straying from the wiser path of the passive listener. So he remarked, "Of course not," and brought the conversation back to Boz.

"Mr. Dickens," said Grandmamma, "did me the honour to converse with me in Manchester in the sixties. I was there with me dear husband on business, and we stayed in the same hotel as Mr. Dickens, and breakfasted at the same table. The toast was not good, and Mr. Dickens, I remember, compared it in his inimitable way to sawdust. It was a perfect simile. He was very droll. What particularly struck me about him was his eye......so bright and restless...... and his quick ways. He seemed all nerves. In the course of our conversation I told him I had met Mr. Thackeray, but he was not interested. I remember another thing he said. In paying his bill he gave the waiter a very generous tip, which was the slang word with which me dear husband always used to describe a douceur. 'There,' Mr. Dickens said, as he gave it to the waiter, 'that's......' How very stupid! I have forgotten what he said, but it was full of wit. 'There,' he said......Dear me!"

"Never mind, Grandmamma," said Naomi, "You will think of it presently."

"But it was so droll and clever," said the old lady. "Surely, Alderely dear, I have told you of it?"

"Oh, yes, Mother, many times," said Alderley; "but I can't for the life of me think of it at the moment. Strange, isn't it," he remarked to us all at large, "how often the loss of memory in one person seems to infect others?......One forgets and all forget. We had a case in Chambers the other day."

Their father's stories having no particular sting in them, his children abandoned him to their mother, who listens devotedly, and we again fell into couples.

But it was useless to attempt disregard to old Mrs. Wynne. There was a feeling in the air that trouble lay ahead, and we all reserved one ear for her.

"And Mr. Thackeray?" Mr. Dabney asked, with an appearance of the deepest interest.

"Mr. Thackeray," said Grandmamma, "I had met in London some years before. It was at a conversazione at the Royal Society's. Mr. Wynne and I were leaving at the same time as the great man......and however you may consider his writings he was great physically......and there was a little confusion about the cab. Mr. Thackeray thought it was his, and we thought it was ours. Me dear husband, who was the soul of courtesy, pressed him to take it; but Mr. Thackeray gave way, with the most charming bow to me. It was raining. A very tall man with a broad and kindly face.. ...although capable of showing satire......and gold spectacles. He gve me a charming bow, and said, 'There will be another one for me direclty.' I hope there was, for it was raining. Those were, however, his exact words: 'There will be another one for me directly'.

Mr. Dabney expressed himself in suitable terms, and cast a swift glance at his hostess on his other side as if seeking for relief. She was talking, as it happened, about a novel of the day, in which little but the marital relation is discussed, and Mr. Dabney, on being drawn into the discussion, remarked sententiously. "The trouble with marriage is that while every woman is at heart a mother, every man is at heart a bachelor.

"What was that?" said Grandmamma, who is not really deaf, but when in a tight place likes to gain time by this harmless imposition. "What did Mr. Dabney say?" she repeated, appealing to Naomi.

Poor Mr. Dabney turned scarlet.

"Oh, it was nothing, nothing," he said, "Merely a chance remark."

"I don't agree with you," replied

Grandmamma severely, thus giving away her little ruse. "There is no trouble with marriage. It is very distressing to me to find this new attitude with regard to that state. When I was a girl we neither talked about incompatibilty and temperament and all the rest of it, nor thought about them. We married. I have had to give up my library subscription entirely because they send me nothing nowadays but nauseous novels about husbands and wives who cannot get on together". "I hope," she added, turning swiftly to Mr. Dabney, "that those are not the kind of books that you write."

"Oh, no," said Mr. Dabney; "I don't write books at all."

"Not write books at all?" said Grandmamma, "I understood you were an author."

"No, dear," said Naomi, "not an author. Mr. dabney is an editor. He edits a very interesting weekly paper, "The Balance". He stimulates others to write."

"I never heard of the paper," said Grandmamma, who is too old to have any pity.

"I must show it to you," said Naomi, "Frank writes for it."

"Very well," said Grandmamma, "But I am disappointed. I thought that Mr. Dabney wrote books. The papers are growing steadily worse, and more and more unfit for general reading, especially in August. I hope," she said, turning to Mr. Dabney again, "you don't write any of those terrible letters in August about home life?"

Mr. Dabney said that he didn't, and Grandmamma began to soften. "I am very fond of literary society," she said, "It is one of my great griefs that there is so little literary society in Ludlow. You are too young, of course, Mr. Dabney, but I am sure it will interest you to know that I knew personally both Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray."

Here a shudder ran round the table, and Lionel practically disappeared into his plate. I stole a glance at Mr. Dabney's face. Drops of perspiration were beginning to break out on his forehead.

"Mr. Dickens," the old lady continued remorselessly, and all unconscious of the devastation she was causing, "Mr. Dickens I met at an Hotel in Manchester in the sixties. I was there with me dear husband on business, and we breakfasted at the same table. Mr. Dickens was all nerves and fun. The toast was not good, and I remember he compared it in his inimitable way to sawdust."

Mr. Dabney ate feverishly.

"I remember also that he made a capital joke as he was giving the waiter a tip, as me dear husband always used to call a douceur. "There," he said----"

Mr. Dabney twisted a silver fork into the shape of hairpin.

It was, of course, Naomi who came to the rescue. "Grandmamma," she said, "We have a great surprise for you......the first dish of strawberries."

"So early!" said the old lady, "How very extravagant of you, but how very pleasant." She took one and ate it slowly, while Mr. Dabney laid the ruined fork aside and assumed the expression of a reprieved assassin.

"Doubtless!" Grandmamma quoted, "God could have made a better berry, but doubtless He never did. Do you know," she asked Mr. Dabney, "who said that? It was a favourite quotation of me fawther's."

"Oh, yes," Mr. Dabney, who had been cutting it out of articles every June for years, "it was Bishop Butler."

The situation was saved, for Grandmamma talked exclusively of fruit for the rest of the meal. Ludlow, it seems, has some very beautiful gardens, especially Dr. Sworder's, which is famous for its figs.

At one moment, however, we all went cold agian, for Lionel, who is merciless, suddenly asked in a silence, "Didn't you once meet Thackeray, Grandmamma?"

Naomi, however, was too quick for him, and before the old lady could begin she had signalled to her mother to lead the way to the drawing-room.

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**NOTES**

Edward Verrall Lucas was born in 1868 and died in 1938. He was brought up at Brighton and he attended as many as eleven schools. At the age of sixteen he was appointed an apprentice to a bookseller. Later, however, he studied at the University College, London.

He was a prolific and versatile writer. He was also a great anthologist. He worked on the staff of various papers, including the famous "Punch".He will be best remembered for his work on Charles Lamb, and for his charming essays. He also wrote about a dozen novels, travel books, and a series of comic skits like "The dinner-Party". A skit is a light piece of satire and it is comic because the incongruity of the situation makes us laugh.

This story brings out the comic aspects of Mrs. Wynne, the grandmamma. She talks of her interest in literature, and particularly of Dickens and Thackeray in a manner that makes her amusing and droll. This is an obsession with her. Note that she is not a humorous character but a comic one. She is snobbish, opinionated and boring.

The story thus becomes a comic skit on the relationship between the old and the young as well as on some of the views expressed in it.

| | |
|---|---|
| **a Radical:** | a politician who wants to introduce fundamental and extreme reforms in his country. |
| **Dickens:** | a major novelist of the 19th century. |
| **Thackeray:** | another major novelist of the same period. |
| **Greater London:** | the vast new areas joind to the old town of London. |
| **Boz:** | a pseudonym under which Dickens contributed to the "Morning Chronicle",London, a series of "Sketches of Life and Character". |
| **douceur:** | bribe. |
| **Conversazione:** | soiree (evening or social gathering), given by a learned or art society. |
| **a reprievad assassin:** | a murderer whose execution has been suspended. |
| **Ludlow:** | a suburban town. |
| **What Price?:** | a taunting questioning of the vaunted value of something |

| | |
|---|---|
| | (vaunted: boasted of). |
| **What Price All Pinto?** | Pinto means a piebald (horse); it is figuratively used in a bad sense. The expression questions the high price of such a horse. A foolish bargain; not a very happy talk or action. |

## EXERCISES

1. Write a note on the character of Mrs. Wynne, the grandmamma.
2. Discuss the "Dinner-Party" as a comic skit.
3. Describe the story "The Dinner-Party" in your own words, but in as lively a manner as the author has done.
4. Describe the behaviour of the other characters in the story towards Mrs. Wynne, the grandmamma.

*** ** * ** ***

## HEROES AND HEROINES

*Stephen Leacock*

"What are you reading?" I asked the other day of a blue-eyed boy of ten curled up among the sofa cushions.

He held out the book for me to see.

"Dauntless Ned among the Cannibals," he answered.

"Is it exciting?" I inquired.

"Not very," said the child in a matter-of-fact tone.

"But it's not bad."

I took the book from him and read aloud at the opened page.

"In a compact mass the gigantic savages rushed upon our hero, shrieking with rage and brandishing their huge clubs. Ned stood his ground fearlessly, his back to a banana tree. With a sweep of his cutlass he severed the head of the leading savage from his body, while with a back stroke of his dirk he stabbed another to the heart. But resistance against such odds was vain. By sheer weight of numbers, Ned was borne to the ground. His arms were then pinioned with stout ropes made of the fibres of the boo-booda tree. With shrieks of exultation the savages dragged our hero to an opening in the woods where a huge fire was burning, over which was suspended an enormous cauldron of bubbling oil. "Boil him, boil him!" yelled the savages, now wrought to the point of frenzy!

"That seems fairly exciting, isn't it?" I said.

"Oh he won't get boiled," said the little boy. "He is the hero."

So I knew that the child has already taken his first step in the disillusionment of fiction.

Of course he was quite right as to Ned. This wonderful youth, the hero with whom we all begin an acquaintance with books, passes unhurt through a thousand perils. Cannibals, Apache Indians, war, battles, shipwrecks, leave him quite unscathed. At the most Ned gets a flesh wound which is healed, in exactly one paragraph, by that wonderful drug called a 'simple'.

But the most amazing thing about this particular hero, the boy Ned, is the way in which he turns up in all great battles and leading events of the world.

It was Ned, for example, who at the critical moment at Gettysburg turned in his saddle to General Meade and said quietly, "General, the day is ours." "If it is," answered Meade, as he folded his field glass, "you alone, Ned, have saved it."

In the same way Ned was present at the crossing of the Delaware with Washington. Thus:

"What do you see, Ned?" said Washington, as they peered from the leading boat into the driving snow.

"Ice," said Ned, "My boy," said the Great

American General, and a tear froze upon his face as he spoke, "you have saved us all."

Here is Ned at Runnymede when King John with pen in hand was about to sign the Magna Carta.

" For a moment the King paused irresolute, the uplifted quill in his hand, while his crafty, furtive eyes indicated that he might yet break his plighted faith with the assembled barons.

Ned laid his mailed hand upon the parchment.

"Sign it," he said sternly, "or take the consequences."

The King signed.

" Ned," said the Baron de Bohun, as he removed his iron vizor form his bronzed face, "thou hast this day saved all England."

In the stories of our boyhood in which Ned figured, there was no such thing as a heroine, or practically none. At best she was brought in as an afterthought. It was announced on page three hundred and one that at the close of Ned's desperate adventures in the West Indies he married the beautiful daughter of Don Diego, the Spanish governor of Portobello; or else, at the end of the great war with Napoleon, that he married a beautiful and accomplished French girl whose parents had perished in the Revolution.

Ned generally married away from home. In fact his marriages were intended to cement the nations, torn asunder by Ned's military career. But sometimes he returned to his native town, all sun-burned, scarred and bronzed from battle (the bronzing effect of being in battle is always noted): he had changed from a boy to a man, that is, from a boy of fifteen to a man of sixteen. In such a case Ned marries in his own home town. It is done after this fashion.

"But who is this who advances smiling to greet him as he crosses the familiar threshold of the dear old house? Can this tall, beautiful girl be Gwendoline, the child-play-mate of his boyhood?"

Well, can it? I ask it of every experienced reader--can it or can it not?

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**NOTES**

Stephen Leacock (1869--1944) taught Economics and History at McGill University in Canada. He is best known as a humorous writer. He wrote humorous stories and essays which combine gay absurdities with a penetrating criticism of society.

The story is written in a style which is concise and at places scintillating. It is a humorous skit on heroes and heroines. Ned is always the hero, the victor and the saviour. He always comes out unscathed and successful.

The heroine was added to the ritual much later in history. She can be one of the two or three stock characters. She is a reward with which the hero is presented.

**Gettysburg:** Battle of Gettysburg, fought in Southern Pennsylvania (July 1-3, 1863), was considered the turning point of the Civil War. General Meade defeated Lee and on 5th July the Confederates began their retreat into Virginia.

Abraham Lincoln delivered his

famous brief Address here on 19th November 1863.

**Washington:** George Washington (1732-99), Ist President of the United States (1789-97), was born in Virginia. His education was elementary but he made great military achievements against the Indians and the French. He also played a great role in the conflict with Great Britain. He was chosen commander-in-chief of the Continental Army in June 1775 upon the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Among his military achievements was the famous recrossing of the Delaware in December 1776 into New Jersey when he took Trenton and Princeton in a counterattack. This was part of his attempt to defend the indefensible New York.

**Runnymede:** on the right bank of the Thames in Surrey, where on 15th June 1215 the Barons forced King John to confirm Magna Carta.

**Magna Carta:** the Great Charter of the Liberties of England, granted by King John under pressure from the Barons at Runnymede. Its chief provisions were that no freeman should be imprisoned, banished, or in any way destroyed except by the law of the land and that supplies (except aids imposed on tenants-in-chief on certain specific occasions) should not be demanded without the consent of the Common Council of the realm.

## EXERCISES

1. What do you learn about heroes and heroines from this story?
2. Describe the great role Ned has always played all through history.
3. Why, in your opinion, is Ned always the hero of great historical and military achievements?
4. What role does the heroine play in the Ned story?

*** ** * ** ***

## JEWEL OF A GIRL

*Raja Tridiv Roy*

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In the fashionable quarter of Karachi there was a newly opened jeweller's shop. One rainy day an ivory white cadillac glided up to the entrance and ejected a sophisticated young lady dressed in the height of fashion. One did not need a second glance to realise that she belonged to the elite of the city. She had made one or two rather expensive purchases previously and the establishment was grateful for her august patronage.

She was led to the private office which was situated in the centre of the building. Some weeks ago she had placed a telephonic order for an identical pair of diamond sets, set in platinum. There was one in the show case,she had asked for a twin. Now she enquired about the second set.

It was all but ready--only if madam would wait.

"So sorry--I'm in a hurry. I'll pick it up in the evening."

She collected one set and the cash memo and then paid cash--as was her custom. "Please keep it ready. I shall return at five ' She smiled sweetly, her purchase snugly in her spacious handbag. The Manager bowed her out of his private office.

At 5 p.m. the lady reappeared and was instantly conducted to the private room. The Manager, beaming, handed her the second case. "The memo is packed inside, madam."

"How considerate. Thank you so much."

The lady, with the package under her arm, non-chalantly walked out onto the main showroom.

The Manager, immensely buoyed at the successful sale of two very highly priced sets of diamonds, was still smiling complacently. He said, barely audibly, punctuated with an apologetic throat clearing now and then.

"Madam today is a little pre-occupied." As this made no impression on the lady, who continued on her outward journey, he reminded her again. "The money, Madam. A trifle, of course."

"What," exclaimed the lady in amazement, turning round and confronting him aggressively. Some purchasers, or intending ones, watched enthralled.

"Today madam is very absentminded."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said the lady and resumed her graceful walk.

"Stop her," shouted the Manager at the doorman, in alarm.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this lady is running away with my ornaments, without paying."

"Are you, by any chance, accusing me of theft?" Her eyes blazed indignantly.

"No, madam, perhaps this is a lapse of memory on your part."

The lady smiled. "Now, please do not try to detain me. I've an appointment."

"Appointment! Pay me first." The Manager stood by the entrance blocking her path.

"This is preposterous. I'm afraid I shall be compelled to ring for the police."

An elderly man detached himself from the eager crowd of observers and strode forward. He addressed the Manager who was now twitching in agitation.

"Are you," said the self-appointed arbiter, "are you accusing this lady of theft? Daylight robbery would be more appropriate."

"Well, it amounts to that. She is walking off without paying. And as cool as ice."

"Madam, and what do you say to this charge?"

"You are all my witnesses," said the lady in a voice of offended dignity, her eyes taking in the congregation, "You have heard this--this Manager--accuse me of theft. I'm going to sue him for damages."

"Certainly," said the spokesman of the crowd, "provided his charge is false."

"Ring up the police, then," said the lady, a picture of a much wronged soul.

"I certainly shall," said the Manager and did so.

The Police came. A case was instituted. According to evidence adduced in court it was conclusively proved that the lady had purchased only one set of ornaments, which was found in her spacious handbag with the cash memo. The numbers of the notes which the lady had paid tallied with those found in the Manager's safe. The Bank confirmed not only the numbers but also her inveterate practice of having the numbers of her notes noted, checked and countersigned when the amount withdrawn was large. Yes, she had drawn the sum the day previous to the incident.

The Establishment lost not only the Jewels and her patronage but had to pay heavy damages --for the lady was of unblemished reputation, and of position.

The Manager lost his job as well as his security deposit with the firm. But to this day--he is still a bachelor--he believes that the lady had had an attack of amnesia. The alternative, based on his study of human nature, was unthinkable when applied to this lady--and therefore inapplicable.

## NOTES

Raja Tridiv Roy was born in 1933 at Rajbaria in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. He read law and was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, London in 1951. In 1953 he succeeded his father as hereditary Chief of Chakma. He devoted himself untiringly to the welfare of the Buddhist tribes in his charge. He initiated many reforms among them. He had been a member of the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly and in 1970 he was elected by an overwhelming majority to the National Assembly of Pakistan. In 1971 he was sworn in as a Minister of the Federal Government and held the portfolio of Minorities Affairs and Tourism till 1974.

He has travelled widely both in an unofficial capacity and on official duty. In September 1972 he led the Pakistani delegation to the United

Nations General Assembly session.

This story has been taken from a collection of thirteen stories entitled "The Windswept Wahini" which he has dedicated to the thirteen tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

His work shows a sophisticated cosmopolitan outlook. The story selected here shows his skill at satire and at seizing upon a novel and surprising situation. His criticism of modern society is implicit and he effects it without administering any harsh rebuke.

| | |
|---|---|
| **cadillac:** | large expensive car. |
| **august:** | respected. |
| **memo:** | bill. |
| **buoyed:** | uplifted. |
| **enthralled:** | fascinated. |
| **arbiter:** | judge. |
| **to sue:** | to prosecute in a law-court. |
| **adduced:** | brought forward. |
| **tallied:** | matched. |
| **damages:** | sum of money paid in compensation. |
| **unblemished:** | unsullied, untarnished. |
| **amnesia:** | loss of memory. |

## EXERCISES

1. What is the significance of the title of the story?
2. Why was it easy for the woman to execute the fraud?
3. Pretend you were one of the crowd looking

on at the scene between the manager and the lady. Describe your feelings.

4. Why did the manager prefer to believe that the lady had suffered an attack of amnesia?

*** ** * ** ***

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*R.K. & M.I.R. Polkinghorne*

Abraham Lincoln was born in a little log cabin set in the midst of a barren and desolate wilderness in the State of Kentucky, on February 12, 1809. The States of America were spreading westward through brave pioneers. Some were quite new frontier towns in Lincoln's time, where settlers were beginning to make homes, but in the east there were fine towns and buildings, and much cultivated land.

Abraham, or Abe, as he was called, heard many tales about the Red Indians, but now they had gone farther north and west, and were less often to be seen. In the wild forests and country round there lived many wild creatures, beasts and birds, especially fierce turkeys.

Abe and his sister helped their parents. Abe at six could do all sorts of useful chores, fetch water, use a small axe, gather sticks for fires, which were so much needed on cold winter days.

His father, Thomas Lincoln, was inclined to live a roving life and not settle down in one place. He had never learned to read or write. He had no use for reading or writing. As the farm in Kentucky was not very successful, Thomas decided to try his luck in the new State of Indiana. It meant a journey of about a hundred miles. He took most of their belongings by boat. His wife and two children went on foot with the help of two horses, which carried some bedding, and on whose backs a tired child could sometimes have a ride.

The first thing they did when they reached the place where they were going to live was to build some sort of shelter. The first hut had a roof, but it was enclosed on only three sides, so big fires had to be kept burning for warmth and to keep off wild creatures. Abe helped all he could, even using a small axe.

When more land had been cleared corn and vegetables were planted, and a much better house built, with a proper door and window. It had a strong wooden fence, or stockade, around it as a protection. Inside it they were safe. Abe helped to keep the enclosure tidy, and even to make chairs or tables.

As soon as he was eight his father began to teach him to use a gun. This delighted Abe.

One day some turkeys came near the stockade, for there were many in the woods around. He asked his mother if he might try to shoot one. She fixed the gun in one of the loopholes for guns and told him to be careful. The turkeys began to strut towards the stockade. Bang! went the gun, and backward fell Abe. He quickly jumped up and rushed out. There on the ground lay a big turkey!

"I've killed him!" shouted Abe. "What a monster!" Of course, it was really an accident, and the fault of the turkey for strutting in front of the bullet! But all the same it was a great event for Abe.

One of the pleasures of those early days was hearing his mother read aloud from the Bible every Sunday and sometimes on other days. It was Abe's first story-book, and, indeed, reading-book.

His first great grief was the sudden death of his good mother. Sarah, his sister, was only eleven years old, and could not manage the housework very well, although Abe was very handy and helped her all he could. It was then that his father brought him books from the house of a man for whom he often did some work--Pilgrim's Progress, Aesop's Fables and Robinson Crusoe. These books opened a new world for him.

Then life became brighter. Thomas Lincoln married again. The new stepmother brought comfort with her. She was a widow with seven children, and they became a merry family. She soon made the log cabin very comfortable with her furniture, and thought of many improvements. She insisted on all the children going to school; she saw that Abe dressed properly, and not in any odd clothes. The old schoolmaster thought Abe a very intelligent boy and tried to teach him to behave like a gentleman. At fifteen Abe was six feet high, and he did not know in the least how to deal with his long arms and legs!

When he became a man he earned his living in a variety of ways-by splitting rails for fences, keeping a country store, acting as postmaster and surveyor, and working on the river as a boatman. On one of his river trips he went down the Mississippi to New Orleans, where he saw something of slavery, which made a lasting impression on him. He admired the strange buildings he saw in New Orleans, a half-Spanish town.

He was popular with many people, and when he was twenty-five his neighbours elected him to a term in the Illinois Legislature. He then read law, and was admitted to the Bar at the age of twenty-eight. His hard work at law developed in him a great power of lucid argument. The Southern States had Negro slaves who worked in the cotton-fields. In the Northern States the idea of slavery was not popular, and Lincoln spoke eloquently against it.

In 1861 Lincoln had become so popular in the Northern States that he was chosen President of the U.S.A., but the Southern States were not pleased, and they chose their own President, Jefferson Davis. But Lincoln and many other Americans would not allow the Southern States to secede. A Civil War (1861-65) was fought. The fighting went on over a vast area, across the woods and hills of Tennessee and Virginia and along the Mississippi. After four years of war Lincoln and the Union won.

A few days after the war Lincoln was shot by a mad man at a Washington theatre (April 1865), just as he was having almost his first moments of real peace since the struggle began. "And now," as some one who was with him said, "he belongs to the ages."

Like Washington, Lincoln showed himself a true patriot. "Let us have faith," Lincoln said, "that right rules might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we see it."

He was a unique man because with little formal education he became one of his country's greatest orators. His humour, his patience under misunderstandings and unjust attacks, his courage when others wanted to yield, his steady grasp of events when the fate of his country seemed desperate, the "matchless beauty" and eloquence of his Gettysburg Address, made him a man never to be forgotten. The whole world recognized his greatness. Today in the most prominent places in London and Manchester there stand monuments to the great American

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**NOTES**

This story is taken from "Tales the Years Tell" by R.K. and M.I.R. Polkinghorne. They have based this and other stories in the volume on old manuscripts and records written at the time the events happened. Their records contain the authentic words, thoughts and deeds of the people of the past.

This story is also written in a simple and natural manner. The writers let the story tell itself and thus grip the reader. The idea of presenting the young readers with such stories as these is to acquaint them with the life story of great people as well as to enable their imagination to work on the visualizing of their greatness in a manner which is not only intellectual but also emotional.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Red Indians:** | the aboriginal inhabitants of America who were driven away into mountains and wildernesses by the white settlers from Europe. Many of them were killed. |
| **Pilgrim's Progress:** | a major work in the English language. It is written by John Bunyan as an allegory; some writers take it as an allegorical novel. The book describes man's spiritual journey in this world and the difficulties and trials through which he passes. In this way he tries to set his back upon the world, with a view to reaching heaven. |

An allegory is a piece of writing in which a second and deeper meaning is to be read beneath and concurrent with the surface story.

**Aesop's Fables:** one of the world classics. A book of fables by Aesop, a semi-legendary person, said to have been originally a slave who lived during 6th century B.C. These fables are probably a compilation from many authors, made by him.

**Robinson Crusoe:** a major work in the English language written by Daniel Defoe. It is written as a book of travels and regarded by critics as a novel, the author also being a novelist. It has a strong appeal for children, and has also a double meaning.

## EXERCISES

1. Draw a character sketch of Abraham Lincoln.
2. Describe the early life of the hero.
3. Can we look upon Abraham Lincoln as a hero? Give reasons.
4. Write an essay on heroes and heroism, in the light of this story.

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## THE FIRST WOMAN IN SPACE

*Patrick Pringle*

"I do not dare to say that a woman can cope better with space conditions than a man," the world's first woman cosmonaut said after the flight, "for fear of offending the men."

She did not need to say that in space a woman was at least equal with man not only physically and mentally but in the all-important spirit--courage, will-power, and determination. She had just proved it.

Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova was born in 1937 in a small village near the town of Yaroslavl, in the Soviet Union. Her father was a tractor-driver. Her mother was a milkmaid. She can hardly remember the last time she saw her father, when he kissed her good-bye and went off to fight in the war. She was still only a small child when he was killed, leaving a young widow with two small daughters and a baby son.

After the war they moved to Yaroslavl, and Valentina's mother went to work in a textile mill. When they left school both her daughters joined her there. Valentina studied at the same time at a technical institute, and was promoted to assistant foreman at the mill.

Like many other young women of her generation, she was interested in flying. At twenty-two she joined a local club to take up parachuting. Here for the first time she showed that she was not an ordinary young woman after all. Even the most daring parachutists are usually a bit nervous to begin with. But Valentina's instructors had never seen anyone, man or woman, make a first jump so confidently and fearlessly.

"She just smiled a relaxed smile, and sauntered out into the open sky," one of them described it afterwards.

She soon won her badge as a first-class parachutist, and she made more than a hundred jumps in the next two years.

Then one day, during a Komsomol meeting, someone burst in and shouted:

"A man in space! Yuri Gagarin, a Soviet man, is in space!"

It was April 12, 1961, a date now as historic as that of the first flight of the Wright brothers in 1903. The Russians had beaten the Americans in the space race--the race to put the first man in space. Vostok-1, the world's first manned spaceship, had gone into orbit.

Gagarin circled the earth once, which was enough to prove his claim as the first man in the cosmos, and landed after a flight of 108 minutes. An unknown young man had literally rocketed to world fame. He was officially created a Hero of the Soviet Union, and Russian hero-worship knew no bounds. Immediately schoolchildren in Leningrad formed the first Junior Spacemen's Club. Girls as well as boys, many of them barely twelve years old, began to study space flight so that they, too, perhaps, would become cosmonauts when they were grown up.

"Man in space! Man in sapce!"

Another man had gone up, another Russian, Herman Titov. He circled the earth several times, remaining in orbit for a day.

Both Gagarin and Titov were officers in the Soviet Air Force. Other young pilots also wondered if perhaps they might be able to fly in space. Parachutists, too, had similar day-dreams. Many volunteered, but few were chosen for training as cosmonauts. Among the successful ones was Valentina Tereshkova who had never flown an aeroplane. That did not matter, she discovered. But almost everything else did. First she was given a medical examination, much stricter than anything she had known before. The doctors seemed to want to take her body apart and inspect every organ. She was put through one test after another. And it was not just her body that was examined, but also her mind.

"What are you looking for?" she asked one of the doctors.

"Perfect health, exceptional strength and stamina, high intelligence, outstanding judgment, quickness of reactions, coolness, courage, tremendous determination, and an iron will," he replied.

"Does anyone so perfect really exist?" she asked.

"Perhaps not quite," he admitted with a smile, "But we have to get as near the ideal as we can. We don't need many such persons, you know. Not yet."

Valentina was one of the handful of applicants who passed all the medical tests and was admitted to the cosmonaut's training school. That was in the spring of 1962. By then another man had flown in space not a Russian but an American, John Glenn. Another American, Scott Carpenter, followed soon afterwards.

"Now, it's our turn again," said Yuri Gagarin.

The man she had admired when he was literally more than a hundred miles above her was now instructing her in the use of controls in a spaceship. Titov came to lecture at the school, too. Both held the new rank of Space Pilot of the U.S.S.R.

"Physically speaking," one of the doctors said, "a woman is better equipped for space travel than a man. The female body is tougher than the male, and better able to withstand strain. That is why women survive the shock of accidents and of surgery better than men. And then, generally speaking, a perfect specimen of a woman is smaller than a physically perfect man. There is a shorter distance between the heart and the brain, so that she stands up better to the gravity forces that drain away the blood and cause black-outs. Her muscles use less energy, so she needs less oxygen and food-an important factor in space travel, a vital one in trips to Mars or the moon. Perhaps the first astronaut will be a woman. The most economical way of getting a human brain into a spaceship with a minimum amount of body," he said drily, "is to insert a light woman."

"Haven't men anything in their favour?" asked a young Air Force pilot.

"Their main physical advantage, their superior strength, is wasted in a spaceship," said the doctor. "Isn't it, Major Titov?"

The cosmonaut laughed.

"Yes, indeed," he said, "Nothing is an effort up there, away from gravity. Nothing weighs anything--a child's little finger could lift a ton of bricks."

"What about keeping cool in an emergency?" asked another man.

"Having worked with women doctors and nurses in hospitals, I am inclined to think they are at least as good at that as we men."

All this came out in one of the lectures on space medicine. There were other lectures, on rocket propulsion and on the structure and working of a spaceship, on radio communications and on the operation of the various instruments and controls. This was all classroom work, requiring a keen brain and a good memory. Other parts of the training made demands of a different kind.

All the students had to undergo a course of parachute drops. "This isn't work, this is fun," said Valentina, her eyes shining.

"It may not be so funny as you think," one of the instructors warned her, "Have you ever done a cockscrew jump?"

She had not, but she was willing and even eager to try. Again those who watched her marvelled at her casual, fearless manner as she stepped out of the aeroplane, to plunge down with her body spinning round at great speed. It was not particularly pleasant, she observed, as her head became heavier and she felt a stabbing pain round her eyes. But she had been told how to come out of it.

"Stretch out your arms and legs, and face downward," the instructor had said.

It needed an effort to force her limbs out, but after that she had no trouble. The spinning slowed down and finally stopped. She landed safely and waved to show she was all right.

"She's a cool one," said the instructor. He said it again in his report.

Other parachute drops in the programme included one over a forest, where she landed in the top branches of tall trees, and another over a lake, where she had to release herself from her harness while in the water and then swim for the shore. Another, not the most popular among the students although Valentina thought it great fun, was the delayed-action drop. The parachutist had to drop with his parachute unopened, drop like a stone until he was as near the earth as he dared go, and then pull the cord that opened the parachute.

Other parts of the training programme were not such fun.

Nobody enjoyed the "Wheel", as they called it--a machine that looked as if it had been brought from a scientists' fairground, with a cabin that was spun round and round at terrific speed. Strapped in this cabin, with wires fastened to her body so that the doctors could watch her reactions, Valentina felt as if she was being squashed and crushed as she was flung round and round. Her face was contorted, her heart pounded furiously, she could not shut her eyes and could hardly even breathe. She felt faint, her consciousness was slipping away...

She forced herself to stay awake and alert, to raise her hands to show she could still use them, to read the signs flashed on a screen and remember them. This was part of the test.

Then there was the treadmill, and there were the overhead swings to train her against space sickness...and there was the vibration table, another fiendish device, where she was rattled and shaken at a rate of 200 vibrations per minute. There was the noise chamber, where loudspeakers screeched and howled, clattered and hissed with painfully loud and hideous sounds. There was the heat chamber, which was like a Turkish bath, and in which she had to sit, fully clothed, and operate knobs and levers to a set programme while her examiners peered in at her through plate-glass windows. They told her to write her name, again and again, while they pumped the air out of the chamber, watching for the moment when she blacked out. Then they pumped the air back in, again noted the readings on the dials when she showed signs of life--and told her to write her name again.

Another part of the training was preparation for being weightless. The flights of Gagarin and Titov had shown that the human body reacted well when it was beyond the pull of gravity, but life where everything weighed nothing needed getting used to. A catapult device, with a sudden burst of acceleration, made the students weightless for a few seconds, and they learnt to squeeze foods and liquids into their mouths from tubes, the only way to eat in space.

The training programme was carefully planned, but the students were not told the plan. They never knew what was coming next. They would have quiet calm lectures on astronomy and engineering, they would sit in models of spaceship cockpits and be taught to understand more than a hundred needles and dials. They would be lulled into a sense of security and well-being--and then, suddenly, they would be hurled round by the Wheel, shaken by the vibrating table, deafened in the noise chamber, scorched and suffocated in the heat chamber, dropped by parachute into a forest or lake.

Between these tests of body and nerve there were mental tests. Some of these were simple arithmetic. The students were told to do quite easy sums in their heads. Then the sums became harder--and voices from hidden loudspeakers prompted them with wrong answers.

"Multiply ten by seventeen," Valentina was told
"One hundred and seventy."
"Eleven by sixteen."
"One hundred and seventy-six."
"Thirteen by fifteen."

She had to pause to work that one out. But the voice from the loudspeaker was already telling her the answer.

"One hundred and eight-five," it told her. "One hundred and eighty-five," it repeated persuasively.

"One hundred and eighty-five---"

"One hundred and ninety-five," she said firmly.

The worst ordeal of all was neither noisy nor painful, and not even uncomfortable. It was the quiet chamber.

It was not merely quiet; it was soundless. It was also pitch dark. Valentina, who loved being with other people, had never felt so lonely in her life. She knew they were watching her, with instruments and with infra-red cameras that could take photographs in the dark. She knew they were noting her pulse-rate and listening to her breathing. She wanted to scream but forced herself to keep calm.

They gave her some work to do. She was to report them by radio at certain times. She was to tell them how she felt and what she had been thinking about. When she did so they sometimes answered, and even chatted pleasantly and made her feel a member of society again.

But at other times they said nothing, they did not even acknowledge her report. Had the radio broken down? She wanted to shout at the microphone, to demand an answer; but she stopped herself from doing that, for she wanted most of all to go up in space.

She could leave the school at any time. She could tell the instructors she had had enough, and nobody would blame her for wasting their time. She was liable to be told to leave the school at any time. The instructors could tell her she was not suitable for flying in space. Many students were told this, at various stages of the course, and had to leave without completing it. Valentina's worst fear was that this would happen to her.

One of the hardest things for a student who failed to stay the course was leaving all his friends. There was a wonderful team spirit at the cosmonauts' school, and nobody liked to see anyone else sent away. "Bad luck!" was all one could say. But a day came when everyone said "Good luck!" to two men who left together--bound for space.

They were Colonel Pavel Popovich and Major Andrian Nikolayev, and they soon became known over the world as the "Heavenly Twins". For they were both in orbit together, each in his own vostok--and they both circled the earth many more times than anyone before. Popovich stayed in orbit for almost three days. Nikolayev set a new record by staying up for almost four days.

There was tremendous excitement over their success at the cosmonauts' school, where everyone had known them so well. Valentina was more excited than anyone, for she had been specially friendly with Andrian Nikolayev. Indeed, she suspected that she had begun to fall a little in love with him.

Then she was told that it was her turn next.

Well, almost next. She had been chosen for another 'Tandem' space flight. Her vehicle would be vostok--6. The pilot of Vostok--5 was to be a man, her colleague Valery Bykovsky, whom she now called her Space Brother. Bykovsky was now a colonel. Valentina, who had still never piloted an aeroplane, was awarded the rank of Junior Lieutenant.

They went together to the launching site. Bykovsky was given the call-sign of "Hawk", Valentina of "Seagull". He was to go up first. The date fixed was June 14, 1963. Zero hour was to be 3 p.m.

In the morning Valentina spent an hour at the hairdresser's.

She was at the site to see him off, looking cool and beautiful in an elegant blue linen frock and smart shoes with stiletto heels.

"You don't look like a cosmonaut," said a newspaper reporter, staring at her with disbelief.

I have something else to wear for going up in space," she told him gravely.

Bykovsky said good-bye, and boarded Vostok--5. Valentina watched the launching on the control-room television screen. The flash and smoke and blast of the rocket explosions suddenly alarmed her, and she had a few moments of real fear for her Space Brother. Then she heard his voice on the radio, reporting all was well.She relaxed and smiled.

"It's your turn next," the launching-site commander said to her.

Two days later, when Bykovsky was still orbiting the earth without any trouble, Valentina put on her three-space-suits, one of them fully inflated in case of a sea-landing, and returned to the launching site. Vostok--6, black and gleaming silver, towered over the area, its sharp peak pointing straight up into space.

The men who worked on the site came up with flowers.

There is nothing strange about giving flowers to a woman, even when she is dressed in three bulky space-suits and trailing loose wires that are planted under her skin. It was an ordinary simple gesture. It was also a mark of deep respect for a woman who was proving herself equal in courage to some of the world's bravest men.

She spoke on the radio to her Space Brother.

"Hawk, Hawk, you know my voice. Warm greetings to you."

"I am waiting for you up here," he replied simply.

She said good-bye to earth as she entered the lift that took her up to the nose of the spaceship a hundred feet above the ground. She went into her cabin, and sat in the pilot's seat. The loose wires escaping from her space-suits were fastened to instruments. They would tell the doctors below how her body reacted to the flight. Then the hatch was bolted into place. She was alone, just as much as she had been in the quiet chamber at the cosmonauts' school. But this was the real thing.

She checked the instruments on the panel in front of her. She checked them carefully and methodically, and that took more than an hour.

"Check of instruments complete," she said on the radio. She reported the pressure and humidity in the cabin. "Ready to go."

In the control room the doctors reported that her pulse was steady, her breathing normal.

"I wish mine was," one of the doctors added, his hands trembling with excitement.

The signal was given. The count-down began. The suspense in the control room was hard to bear. Alone in her cabin Valentina waited calmly as the seconds ticked away. Then she felt a sudden jolt. It was 12.30 p.m. on June 16, 1963, and she was on her way into space.

It seemed so quiet and slow, she thought, so much less alarming than the fierce explosion that had told her of the departure of her Space Brother two days before. She could hardly believe it was a normal take-off. But very soon she knew it was, for she felt the spaceship gather speed.

An unseen pressure forced her back in her seat. Her limbs grew heavy, she felt a familiar pain across her eyes and head. It was like the Wheel of the training school--but she was relieved to find, not nearly so bad.

"Zero plus sixty seconds," they told her.

"Feeling fine," she replied.

The pressure was still mounting, but it was bearable. She felt at ease. Now, she, knew, the first stage of the rocket was burning out. On the instrument panel a red light glowed. It turned to green, and she felt another jolt as the booster rocket was fired. The pressure increased again, but she could still report she was feeling fine.

The second stage of the rocket fell away.

Vostok--6 had reached its top speed now 18,000 miles an hour, or 5 miles a second. And now it changed course, swung into orbit, and all the pressure had gone. Valentina moved comfortably in her seat.

"Here is Seagull," she said on the radio, "I see the earth--I feel excellent--Vostok is working well."

Then she spoke to Hawk, and Hawk spoke to her, Colonel Bykovsky welcoming her in space. They sent a joint message to the earth:

"We wish all peoples on earth peace and happiness."

Valentina picked up her log book and placed it on her lap. When she let go, it floated off and circled round her. She grabbed at it, caught it, and brought it back. It weighed nothing. She weighed nothing herself. It was a wonderful feeling of lightness.

"How heavy we all are on earth!" she thought.

She decided to have lunch, and squeezed the food into her mouth like toothpaste. She drank some water. A few drops floated off from her lips and drifted in the air like soap-bubbles.

She checked her course, read off from the instruments, gave the scientists below a full report on all she saw and felt. The earth was 135 miles away. The sky beneath her was clear, and she could see plains and fields and dark-green forests, mountains and lakes and rivers. Quite soon she entered the earth's shadow, and she gasped at the beauty of the colours below. First there was a light blue strip, and then a bluish-orange horizon against a pitch-black background. It changed gradually to light green and then to light yellow, and to blue again.

She looked down on the night side of the earth, and the lights of the big cities shone up at her like stars.

The first orbit was completed in just about an hour and a half. Back over the day side of the earth, she looked down on clouds that appeared like steel-coloured cotton wool. Every now and then the sun broke through, and she saw land again, and sometimes sea.

Everything was going accoridng to schedule. She kept in radio contact with both the earth and her Space Brother, who was a bare three miles away, orbiting slightly nearer to the earth. Besides the serious work of giving scientific reports they exchanged greetings and jokes and even sang. And that night millions of people in Russia and other countries saw them on television screens. Colonel Bykovsky appeared first, giving the thumbs-up sign. Then Valentina was seen, a pretty round face with large laughing eyes and a dimpled chin, all framed in a white helmet.

Then there was silence from Seagull, and anxiety in the control room below.

"Calling Seagull...calling Seagull..."

No answer.

"Calling-Hawk"--Bykovsky replied at once. "Hawk, try to contact Seagull."

His signals were nearer and therefore louder, and they woke his Space Sister up.

"I'm sorry--I dozed off. I shouldn't have done."

The chief designer of the spaceship spoke to her from the control room.

"Your cabin is too hot," he said, "It's 68 degrees. You'll feel better if you bring it down to 60."

Valentina reduced the temperature and soon felt fresher. She opened her visor and passed a cleansing pad over her face. It was the only kind of toilet she could perform.

"Must I come down after twenty-four hours?" she asked. That was the length of time scheduled for her flight.

"How do you feel"

"Wonderful! I want to stay up here longer."

"All right. You may stay."

She stayed a second day and night, and a third.

"Seventy-two hours is enough for your first flight," they told her then, "We're going to bring you both down."

She prepared for re-entry into the earth's atmosphere. A red light glowed on the instrument panel--ten minutes to go. She checked everything again.

"What would you like to eat?" they asked her.

"Potatoes and onions, brown bread and salt," she answered. That toothpaste food might be nourishing, but she wanted to feed full.

The spaceship fired more rockets, but this time forward: They were braking rockets, designed to slow the Vostok's speed. If it had re-entered the earth's atmosphere at orbiting speed it would have been burnt up completely in a few minutes.

Slower and slower--half speed now, and then down to quarter. A mere 4,500 miles per hour. Vostok--6 changed course, and the downward plunge began. Immediately its outer shell caught fire, and Valentina saw the bright red flames streaming past the porthole. Her spaceship was on fire.

She was not disturbed. She knew the outer shell was designed to burn itself off. The wonderful cooling system kept the inside of her cabin at its normal temperature.

Now the overload hit her again--literally this time, for she bruised her nose. The spaceship also began to spin and to shake, and she remembered the vibrating table.

"Seagull, prepare for landing," the control room told her, "Above target. On course. Para-brakes--on!"

The spaceship jerked as a cluster of parachutes opened above it. The overload pressure died away. The Vostok floated down and then stopped. Valentina was back on earth.

She had travelled 1,250,000 miles in nearly 72 hours, making 49 orbits round the earth.

Her Space Brother was brought down two and a half hours later, after almost five days in space.

She wanted a wash, to clean herself up after three days and nights without moving from her seat. But first she had to be seen by the doctors, for medical tests. Then she was free to wallow in a bath, to put on pretty clothes--and to eat potatoes and onions and brown bread.

Three days later the two new cosmonauts were flown to Moscow, and a red carpet was laid out to the aeroplane. The people of the Russian capital cheered wildly when they saw the first spacewoman.

## NOTES

This story is taken from "Women of the Modern World" by Patrick Pringle.

Like the other stories included in this anthology, it also relates itself simply and indeed admirably, creating deep interest and exciting the imagination of the reader. It should particularly inspire young women and help them overcome their inferiority.

It has been established scientifically by now that men and women are equal in all respects except for their specific biological functions. Women can achieve anything man has except where physical prowess is entirely concerned.

Valentina Tereshkova was a gifted young woman who had all the qualities of a cosmonaut. She had a perfect body and above all a spirit that compelled her seek such an extraordinary and unprecedented adventure. By her success she opened great new avenues of achievement for women all over the world.

| | |
|---|---|
| **cosmonaut:** | one who flies in space round the earth. |
| **astronaut:** | one who flies in space to the stars. |
| **Wright brothers:** | the American brothers who built and flew the first aeroplane. |
| **blackout:** | temporary unconsciousness. |
| **rocket propulsion:** | made to move (propelled) by rockets. |
| **stilleto:** | sharply pointed. |
| **hatch:** | the entry door of a spaceship, or the door of a deck on a ship. |

**count-down:** a process of checking all controls before a rocket flight by counting down to two, one and zero, which is the point at which the rocket is fired.

**first stage of the rockets:** spaceships usually have many rockets to propel them. The first stage of the flight is started by one set of rockets, and then these are dropped off and a second stage or set of rockets then provides the power and so on.

**burning out:** fading away; losing power because the fuel in them was almost used up.

**booster rockets:** rockets of the next stage which take over to increase the speed still further.

**log book:** the book in which a pilot or the captain of a ship, writes notes on 'what happens at each stage of a journey.'

**porthole:** the little window of a space-craft, aeroplane or ship.

**witnesses:** the two people who are needed to be official witnesses at a wedding; usually friends of people being married who certify that the wedding has taken place.

## EXERCISES

1. Why did the Russians honour Valentina Tereshkova by making her Hero of the Soviet Union?
2. Write a note on the early life of Valentina Tereshkova.
3. Describe the physical and character qualities of Valentina Tereshkova that made her a perfect choice for space flight.
4. Write short notes on the other cosmonauts mentioned in this story.

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# THE STAR

*H.G. Wells*

It was on the first day of the new year that the announcement was made, almost simultaneously from three observatories, that the motion of the planet Neptune, the outermost of all the planets that wheel about the sun, had become very erratic. Ogilvy had already called attention to a suspected retardation in its velocity in December. Such a piece of news was scarcely calculated to interest a world the greater portion of whose inhabitants were unaware of the existence of the planet Neptune, nor outside the astronomical profession did the subsequent discovery of a faint remote speck of light in the region of the perturbed planet cause any very great excitement. Scientific people, however, found the intelligence remarkable enough, even before it became known that the new body was rapidly growing larger and brighter, that its motion was quite different from the orderly progress of the planets, and that the deflection of Neptune and its satellite was becoming now of an unprecedented kind.

Few people without a training in science can realize the huge isolation of the solar system. The sun with its specks of planets, its dust of planetoids, and its impalpable comets, swims in a vacant immensity that almost defeats the imagination. Beyond the orbit of Neptune there is space, vacant so far as human observation has penetrated, without warmth or light or sound, blank emptiness, for twenty million times a million miles. That is the smallest estimate of the distance to be traversed before the very nearest of the stars is attained. And, saving a few comets more unsubstantial than the thinnest flame, no matter had ever to human knowledge crossed this gulf of space, until early in the twentieth century this strange wanderer appeared. A vast mass of matter it was, bulky, heavy, rushing without warning out of the black mystery of the sky into the radiance of the sun. By the second day it was clearly visible to any decent instrument, as a speck with a barely sensible diameter, in the constellation Leo near Regulus. In a little while an opera glass could attain it.

On the third day of the new year the newspaper readers of two hemispheres were made aware for the first time of the real importance of this unusual apparition in the heavens. "A Planetary Collision," one London paper headed the news, and proclaimed Duchaine's opinion that this strange new planet would probably collide with Neptune. The leader writers enlarged upon the topic. So that in most of the capitals of the world, on January 3rd, there was an expectation, however vague, of some imminent phenomenon in the sky; as the night followed the sunset round the globe, thousands of men turned their eyes skywards to see--the old familiar stars just as they had always been.

Until it was dawn in London and Pollux setting and the stars overhead grown pale. The winter's dawn it was, a sickly filtering accumulation of day-light, and the light of gas and candles shone yellow in the windows to show where people were astir. But the yawning policeman saw the thing, the busy crowds in the markets stopped agape, workmen going to their work betimes, milkmen, the drivers of news-carts, dissipation going home jaded and pale, homeless wanderers, sentinels on their beats, and in the country, labourers trudging afield, poachers slinking home, all over the dusky quickening country it could be seen--and out at sea by seamen watching for the day--a great white star, come suddenly into the westward sky!

Brighter it was than any star in our skies; brighter than the evening star at its brightest. It still glowed out white and large, no mere twinkling spot of light, but a small round clear shining disc, an hour after the day had come. And where science has not reached, men stared and feared, telling one another of the wars and pestilences that are foreshadowed by these fiery signs in the heavens. Sturdy Boers, dusky Hottentots, Gold Coast negroes, French-men, Spaniards, Portuguese, stood in the warmth of the sunrise watching the setting of this strange new star.

And in a hundred observatories there had been suppressed excitement, rising almost to shouting pitch, as the two remote bodies had rushed together, and a hurrying to and fro to gather photographic apparatus and spectroscope, and this appliance and that, to record this novel astonishing sight, the destruction of a world. For it was a world, a sister planet of our earth, far greater than our earth indeed, that had so suddenly flashed into flaming death. Neptune it was, had been struck, fairly and squarely, by the strange planet from outer space and the heat of the concussion had incontinently turned two solid globes into one vast mass of incandescence. Round the world that day, two hours before the dawn, went the pallid great white star, fading only as it sank westward and the sun mounted above it. Everywhere men marvelled at it, but of all those who saw it none could have marvelled more than those sailors, habitual watchers of the stars, who far away at sea had heard nothing of its advent and saw it now rise like a pigmy moon and climb zenithward and hang overhead and sink westward with the passing of the night.

And when next it rose over Europe everywhere were crowds of watchers on hilly slopes, on house-roofs, in open spaces, staring eastward for the rising of the great new star. It rose with a white glow in front of it, like the glare of a white fire, and those who had seen it come into existence the night before cried out at the sight of it. "It is larger," they cried, "It is brighter!" And, indeed the moon a quarter full and sinking in the west was in its apparent size beyond comparison, but scarcely in all its breadth had it as much brightness now as the little circle of the strange new star.

"It is brighter!" cried the people clustering in the streets. But in the dim observatories the watchers held their breath and peered at one another. "It is nearer," they said, "Nearer!"

And voice after voice repeated, "It is nearer," and the clicking telegraph took that up, and it trembled along telephone wires, and in a thousand cities grimy compositors fingered the type. "It is nearer." Men writing in offices, struck with a strange realization, flung down their pens; men talking in a thousand places suddenly came upon a grotesque possibility in those words, "It is nearer." It hurried along awakening streets, it was shouted down the frost-stilled ways of quiet villages, men who had read these things from the throbbing tape stood in yellow-lit doorways shouting the news to the passers-by. "It is nearer." Pretty women, flushed and glittering, heard the news told jestingly between the dances, and feigned an intelligent interest they did not feel. "Nearer. Indeed. How curious! How very, very clever people must be to find out things like that!"

Lonely tramps faring through the wintry night murmured those words of comfort themselves--looking skyward. "It has need to be nearer, for the night's as cold as charity. Don't seem much warmth from it if it is nearer, all the same."

"What is a new star to me?", cried the weeping woman kneeling beside her dead.

The schoolboy, rising early for his examination work, puzzled it out for himself--with the great white star, shining broad and bright through the frost-flowers of his window. "Centrifugal, centripetal," he said, with his chin on his fist, "Stop a planet in its flight, rob it of its centrifugal force, what then? Centripetal has it, and down it falls into the sun! And this--!"

"Do we come in the way? I wonder--"

The light of that day went the way of its brethren, and with the later watches of the frosty darkness rose the strange star again. And it was now so bright that the waxing moon seemed but a pale yellow ghost of itself, hanging huge in the sunset. In a South African city a great man had married, and the streets were alight to welcome his return with his bride. "Even the skies have illuminated," said the flatterer. Under Capricorn, two negro lovers, daring the wild beasts and evil spirits, for love of one another, crouched together in a cane brake where the fireflies hovered. "That is our star," they whispered, and felt strangely comforted by the sweet brilliance of its light.

The master mathematician sat in his private room and pushed the papers from him. His calculations were already finished. In a small white phial there still remained a little of the drug that had kept him awake and active for four long nights. Each day, serene, explicit, patient as ever, he had given his lecture to his students, and then had come back at once to this momentous calculation. His face was grave, a little drawn and hectic from his drugged activity. For some time he seemed lost in thought. Then he went to the window, and the blind went up with a click. Half-way up the sky, over the clustering roofs, chimneys, and steeples of the city, hung the star.

He looked at it as one might look into the eyes of a brave enemy. "You may kill me," he said after a silence, "But I can hold you--and all the universe for that matter--in the grip of this little brain. I would not change. Even now."

He looked at the little phial. "There will be no need of sleep again," he said. The next day at noon, punctual to the minute, he entered his lecture theatre, put his hat on the end of the table as his habit was, and carefully selected a large piece of chalk. It was a joke among his students that he could not lecture without that piece of chalk to fumble in his fingers, and once he had been stricken to impotence by their hiding his supply. He came and looked under his grey eyebrows at the rising tiers of young fresh faces, and spoke with his accustomed studied commonness of phrasing. "Circumstances have arisen--circumstances beyond my control," he said and paused, "which will debar me from completing the course I had designed. It would seem, gentlemen, if I may put the thing clearly and briefly, that--Man has lived in vain."

The students glanced at one another. Had they heard aright? Mad? Raised eyebrows and grinning lips there were, but one or two faces remained intent upon his calm grey-fringed face. "It will be interesting," he was saying, "to devote this morning to an exposition, so far as I can make it clear to you, of the calculations that have led me to this conclusion. Let us assume--."

He turned towards the blackboard, meditating a diagram in the way that was usual to him. "What was that about 'lived in vain'." whispered one student to another. "Listen," said the other, nodding, towards the lecturer.

And presently they began to understand.

That night the star rose later, for its proper eastward motion had carried it some way across Leo towards Virgo, and its brightness was so great that the sky became a luminous blue as it rose, and every star was hidden in its turn, save only Jupiter near the zenith, Capella, Aldebaran, Sirius, and the pointers of the Bear. It was very white and beautiful. In many parts of the world that night a pallid halo encircled it about. It was perceptibly larger; in the clear refractive sky of the tropics it seemed as if it were nearly a quarter the size of the moon. The frost was still on the ground in England, but the world was as brightly lit as if it were midsummer moonlight. One could see to read quite ordinary print by that cold clear light, and in the cities the lamps burnt yellow and wan.

And everywhere the world was awake that night, and throughout Christendom a sombre murmur hung in the keen air over the countryside like the belling of bees in the heather, and this murmurous tumult grew to a clangour in the cities. It was the tolling of the bells in a million belfry towers and steeples, summoning the people to sleep no more, to sin no more, but to gather in their churches and pray. And overhead, growing larger and brighter as the earth rolled on its way and the night passed, rose the dazzling star.

And the streets and houses were alight in all the cities, the shipyards glared, and whatever roads led to high country were lit and crowded all night long. And in all the seas about the civilized lands, ships with throbbing engines, and ships with bellying sails, crowded with men and living creatures, were standing out to ocean and the north. For already the warning of the master mathematician had been telegraphed all over the world, and translated into a hundred tongues. The new planet and Neptune, locked in a fiery embrace, were whirling headlong, ever faster and faster towards the sun. Already, every second this blazing mass flew a hundred miles, and every second its terrific velocity increased. As it flew now, indeed, it must pass a hundred million of miles wide of the earth and scarcely affect it. But near its destined path, as yet only slightly perturbed, spun the mighty planet Jupiter and his moon sweeping splendid round the sun. Every moment now the attraction between the fiery star and the greatest of the planets grew stronger. And the result of that attraction? Inevitably Jupiter would be deflected from his orbit into an elliptical path, and the burning star, swung by his attraction wide of its sunward rush, would "describe a curved path" and perhaps collide with, and certainly pass very close to, our earth. "Earthquakes, volcanic outbreaks, cyclones, sea waves, floods, and a steady rise in temperature to I know not what limit"--so prophesied the master mathematician.

And overhead, to carry out his words, lonely and cold and livid, blazed the star of the coming doom.

To many who stared at it that night until their eyes ached, it seemed that it was visibly approaching. And that night, too, the weather changed, and the frost that had gripped all Central Europe and France and England softened towards a thaw.

But you must not imagine because I have spoken of people praying through the night and people going aboard ships and people fleeing towards mountainous country that the whole world was already in a terror because of the star. As a matter of fact, use and wont still ruled the world, and save for the talk of idle moments and the splendour of the night, nine human beings out of ten were still busy at their common occupations. In all the cities the shops, save one here and there, opened and closed at their proper hours, the doctor and the undertaker plied their trades, the workers gathered in the factories, soldiers drilled, scholars studied, lovers sought one another, thieves lurked and fled, politicians planned their schemes. The presses of the newspapers roared through the nights, and many a priest of this church and that would not open his holy building to further what he considered a foolish panic. The newspapers insisted on the lesson of the year 1000--for then, too, people had anticipated the end. The star was no star--mere gas--a comet; and were it a star it could not possibly strike the earth. There was no precedent for such a thing. Common sense was sturdy everywhere, scornful, jesting, a little inclined to persecute the obdurate fearful.

That night, at seven-fifteen by Greenwich time, the star would be at its nearest to Jupiter. Then the world would see the turn things would take. The master mathematician's grim warnings were treated by many as so much mere elaborate self-advertisement. Common sense at last, a little heated by argument, signified its unalterable convictions by going to bed. So, too, barbarism and savagery, already tired of the novelty, went about their mighty business, and save for a howling dog here and there, the beast world left the star unheeded.

And yet, when at last the watchers in the European States saw the star rise, an hour later it is true, but no larger than it had been the night before, there were still plenty awake to laugh at the master mathematician --to take the danger as if it had passed.

But hereafter the laughter ceased. The star grew--it grew with a terrible steadiness hour after hour, a little larger each hour, a little nearer the midnight zenith, and brighter and brighter, until it had turned night into a second day. Had it come straight to the earth instead of in a curved path, had it lost no velocity to Jupiter, it must have leapt the intervening gulf in a day, but as it was it took five days altogether to come by our planet. The next night it had become a third the size of the moon before it set to English eyes, and the thaw was assured. It rose over America near the size of the moon, but blinding white to look at, and hot; and a breath of hot wind blew now with its rising and gathering strength, and in Virginia, and Brazil, and down the St. Lawrence valley, it shone intermittently through a driving reek of thunder-clouds, flickering violet lightning, and hail unprecedented. In Manitoba was a thaw and devastating floods. And upon all the mountains of the earth the snow and ice began to melt that night, and all the rivers coming out of high country flowed thick and turbid, and soon--in their upper reaches--with swirling trees and the bodies of beasts and men. They rose steadily, steadily in the ghostly briliance, and came trickling over their banks at last, behind the flying population of their valleys.

And along the coast of Argentina and up the South Atlantic the tides were higher than had ever been in the memory of man, and the storms drove the waters in many cases scores of miles inland, drowning whole cities. And so great grew the heat during the night that the rising of the sun was like the coming of a shadow. The earthquakes began and grew until all down America, from the Artic Circle to Cape Horn, hillsides were sliding, fissures were opening, and houses and walls crumbling to destruction. The whole side of Cotopaxi slipped out in one vast convulsion, and a tumult of lava poured out so high and broad and swift and liquid that in one day it reached the sea.

So the star, with the wan moon in its wake, marched across the Pacific, trailed the thunderstorms like the hem of a robe, and the growing tidal wave that toiled behind it, frothing and eager, poured over island and island and swept them clear of men. Until that wave came at last--in a blinding light and with the breath of a furnace, swift and terrible it came--a wall of water, fifty feet high, roaring hungrily, upon the long coasts of Asia, and swept inland across the plains of China. For a space the star, hotter now and larger and brighter than the sun in its strength, showed with pitiless brilliance the wide and populous country; towns and villages with their pagodas and trees, roads, wide cultivated fields, millions of sleepless people staring in helpless terror at the incandescent sky; and then, low and growing, came the murmur of the flood. And thus it was with millions of men that night--a flight nowhither, with limbs heavy with heat and breath fierce and scant, and the flood like a wall swift and white behind. And then death.

China was lit glowing white, but over Japan and Java and all the islands of Eastern Asia the great star was a ball of dull red fire because of the steam and smoke and gases the volcanoes were spouting forth to salute its coming. Above was the lava, hot gases and ash, and below the seething floods, and the whole earth swayed and rumbled with the earthquake shocks. Soon the immemorial snows of Tibet and the Himalayas were melting and pouring down by ten million deepening converging channels upon the plains of Burma and Hindustan. The tangled summits of the Indian jungles were aflame in a thousand places, and below the hurrying waters around the stems were dark objects that still struggled feebly and reflected the blood-red tongues of fire. And in a rudderless confusion a multitude of men and women fled down the broad river-ways to that one last hope of men--the open sea.

Larger grew the star, and larger, hotter, and brighter with a terrible swiftness now. The tropical ocean had lost its phosphorescence, and the whirling steam rose in ghostly wreaths from the black waves that plunged incessantly, speckled with storm-tossed ships.

And then came a wonder. It seemed to those who in Europe watched for the rising of the star that the world must have ceased its rotation. In a thousand open spaces of down and upland the people who had fled thither from the floods and the falling houses and sliding slopes of hills watched for that rising in vain. Hour followed hour through a terrible suspense, and the star rose not. Once again men set their eyes upon the old constellations they had counted lost to them forever. In England it was hot and clear overhead, though the ground quivered perpetually, but in the tropics, Sirius and Capella and Aldebaran showed through a veil of steam. And when at last the great star rose near ten hours late, the sun rose close upon it, and in the centre of its white heart was a disc of black.

Over Asia it was the star had begun to fall behind the movement of the sky, and then suddenly, as it hung over India, its light had been veiled. All the plain of India from the mouth of the Indus to the mouth of the Ganges was a shallow waste of shining water that night, out of which rose temples and palaces, mounds and hills, black with people, who fell one by one into the turbid waters, as heat and terror overcame them. The whole land seemed a-wailing and suddenly there swept a shadow across that furnace of despair, and a breath of cold wind, and a gathering of clouds, out of the cooling air. Men looking up, near blinded, at the star, saw that a black disc was creeping across the light. It was the moon, coming between the star and the earth. And even as men cried to God at this respite, out of the East with a strange inexplicable swiftness sprang the sun. And then star, sun, and moon rushed together across the heavens.

So it was that presently, to the European watchers, star and sun rose close upon each other, drove headlong for a space and then slower, and at last came to rest, star and sun merged into one glare of flame at the zenith of the sky. The moon no longer eclipsed the star but was lost to sight in the brilliance of the sky. And though those who were still alive regarded it for the most part with that dull stupidity that hunger, fatigue, heat, and despair engender, there were still men who could perceive the meaning of these signs. Star and earth had been at their nearest, had swung about one another, and the star had passed. Already it was receding, swifter and swifter, in the last stage of its headlong journey downward into the sun.

And then the clouds gathered, blotting out the vision of the sky, the thunder and lightning wove a garment round the world; all over the earth was such a downpour of rain as men had never before seen, and where the volcanoes flared red against the cloud canopy there descended torrents of mud. Everywhere the waters were pouring off the land, leaving mudsilted ruins, and the earth littered like a stormworn beach with all that had floated, and the dead bodies of the men and brutes, its children. For days the water streamed off the land, sweeping away soil and trees and houses in the way, and piling huge dykes and scooping out Titanic gullies over the countryside. Those were the days of darkness that followed the star and the heat. All through them, and for many weeks and months, the earthquakes continued.

But the star had passed, and men, hunger-driven and gathering courage only slowly, might creep back to their ruined cities, buried granaries, and sodden fields. Such few ships as had escaped the storms of that time came stunned and shattered and sounding their way cautiously through the new marks and shoals of once familiar ports. And as the storms subsided men perceived that everywhere the days were hotter than of yore, and the sun larger, and the moon, shrunk to a third of its fomer size, took now fourscore days between its new and new.

But of the new brotherhood that grew presently among men, of the saving of laws and books and machines, of the strange change that had come over Iceland and Greenland and the shores of Baffin's Bay, so that the sailors coming there presently found them green and gracious, and could scarce believe their eyes, this story does not tell. Nor of the movement of mankind now that the earth was hotter, northward and southward towards the poles of the earth. It concerns itself only with the coming and the passing of the Star.

The Martian astronomers--for there are astronomers on Mars, although they are very different beings from men--were naturally profoundly interested by these things. They saw them from their own standpoint of course. "Considering the mass and temperature of the missile that was flung through our solar system into the sun," one wrote, "it is astonishing what a little damage the earth, which it missed so narrowly, has sustained. All the familiar continental markings and the masses of the seas remian intact, and indeed the only difference seems to be a shrinkage of the white discoloration (supposed to be frozen water) round either pole." Which only shows how small the vastest of human catastrophes may seem, at a distance of a few million miles.

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**NOTES**

Herbert George Wells (1866-1946) is one of the English literary giants. He was born of poor parents and he worked his way up through sheer hard work and astounding talent. He took up literary journalism after a brief period of school teaching. He soon became an author and a world figure. He is a short story writer as well as a novelist.

His stories fall into many categories: the real (like "The Flying Man"), the fantastic, without bringing in science (like "The Star", "The Door in the Wall"), the scientific short stories (like "The Stolen Bacillus" and "The Man who could work Miracles"), and finally, the scientific romances (like "The Time Machine"). Wellsian flights of fancy have become by now actual facts, for example, interplanetary travel. Wells knew how to keep the reader's interest and also how to take him with him into altogether incredible regions. His exuberance and inventiveness keep his stories alive. He was not merely an entertainer; he was a social critic and a prophet.

"The Star" is a story which does not as such involve science; it is merely a fantasy. However, a knowledge of the solar system even at the level of a layman may help us understand and appreciate the story in a deeper and better manner.

It is briefly described below.

A solar system is a sun and all the heavenly bodies which move around it. In our solar system there are six different kinds of heavenly bodies; sun; planets, moons, planetoids, comets and meteors. (Our earth is a planet and moves round our sun). Planetoids are thousands of small lumps of rock between the planets Mars and Jupiter. Comets are great collections of loose dust and rock particles. They form long tails when they travel near the sun. Meteors are single rock fragments which travel through our solar system.

There are nine planets: Mercury, Pluto, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus, Earth, Venus and Mars. All these planets move round the sun in the exact and orderly orbits.

All the planets move so fast that they would fly off in straight lines through space if it were not for the pull of gravity of the sun. The outward pull of the speeding planets and the pull of gravity of the sun are equal in force. The planets thus stay in orbits.

Dark areas called sunspots appear regularly on the face of the sun. They grow large quickly and then disappear. Soon after large sunspots appear, a shower of atomic particles reaches the earth. These atomic particles cause magnetic storms on earth. They may also affect the weather.

"The Star" may be studied in the light of the above information. As revealed at the end of the story, the astronomers on Mars had flung a missile through our solar system into the sun and it was astonishing for them what a little damage the earth which it missed so narrowly had sustained.

On the earth itself, the story is different. People expected "A Planetary Collision". There was wide and deep excitement all over the world. The damage as described in the story was immense. The Mathematician had sent his warning all over the world. But it is interesting to note how common people went about their work and pleasure and in a way ignored this warning.

The missile had thus brought about this excitement and havoc. The story should be read as a fantasy.

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| **Leo:** | fifth sign of the Zodiac. Zodiac is a belt of the heavens including all apparent positions of the sun and the planets as known to the ancients and divided into 12 equal parts, |

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| | called the signs of the Zodiac: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Acquarius and Pisces. |
| **Regulus:** | bright star in Leo. |
| **spectroscope:** | an instrument which tells scientists what chemicals are in the atmosphere of the stars and planets. |

## EXERCISES

1. Discuss how H.G. Wells makes "The Star" an extremely interesting and lively story.
2. Explain the story in the light of scientific principles involved, if any.
3. Describe the story "The Star" in your own words, taking it as a fantasy.
4. Describe how various groups of people reacted to the imminent danger that the star had brought with it.

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مرکزِ یقین، شاد باد
پاک سرزمین کا نظام    قوتِ اخوتِ عوام
قوم، ملک، سلطنت    پائندہ تابندہ باد
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